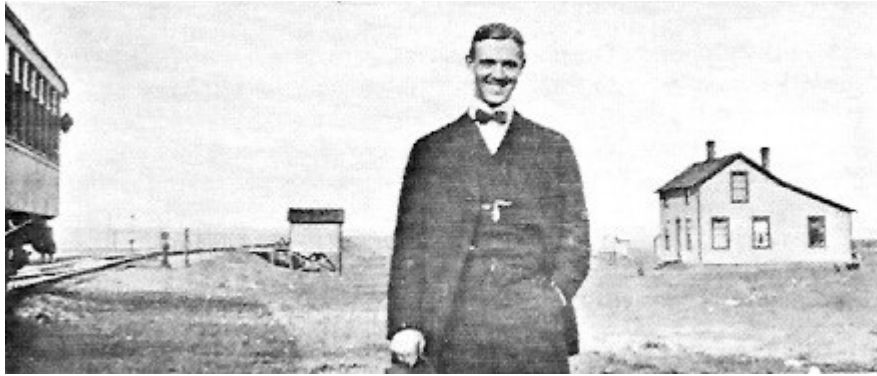


One Man's Striving

By

William Gayley Simpson



William Simpson as a student preacher in 1913, at the beginning of a very long journey of self-liberation from false prophets and other incompetents or exploiters whose poisonous propaganda has terribly sickened the West.



WILLIAM SIMPSON
In the early 1940's

This seven part series from the unpublished autobiography of William Simpson, was originally published in the March, June, and August 1983 and March, August, and December 1984 issues of National Vanguard magazine. This is a deeply moving, hard-hitting, no-holds-barred personal growth odyssey that makes Somerset Maugham's "soul voyage" classics *The Razor's Edge* and *Of Human Bondage* pale by comparison. William Simpson evolved from a liberal Christian minister and co-founder of the leftist ACLU to eventually find enlightenment in a much more realistic and scientific world view.

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The deepest desire in everything that has breath is to live - to fulfill itself, to become what it was meant to become. Every man who, with sincerity and earnestness, begins to seek to know his destiny and the direction his next steps should take receives clear leadings, which become clearer the more he follows them. The needed intimations and intuitions are contained in his own deepest desire.

He may call this "the will of God" and believe it comes from outside and beyond him, as I did in the beginning; or he may remember hearing its voice within himself and give it the authority of the abysmal will of his own being, as I do now. But always, at bottom, it is what he himself wants most; that in him for which he is willing to let everything else in life go; that in him apart from whose satisfaction life holds no meaning.

What he wants, what he is able to want, will depend entirely on the stage he has reached in the development of his perception: how he sees, what he values. According to the meaning he finds, on the one hand, in physical pleasure, material possession, power over people; or, on the other hand, in the contemplation and creation of beauty, the discovery of truth, or the conquest of himself and the devotion of his powers to the realization of a nobler human life on this earth, so must he strive. His desire will be shaped, above all, by how he sees himself: as a separate entity, to be satisfied, therefore, apart from and even at the expense of other people; or, as one with other men, their deepest life so constituting an extension of his own that he may come to his supreme fulfillment in laying down his life for them.

Yet what he thinks he wants may be very different from what he really wants. At one time or another the former may even seem quite opposed to that wanting hid in the profoundest depths of his being, on the realization of which hangs the entire meaning of all his days on the earth. Finding out what one really wants is one of the most difficult, most costly, and, therefore, one of the last things most of us ever attain. Usually it takes long years, much suffering, and repeated experience of disillusionment.

Nevertheless, the desires born of the vision, the adoration, and the conviction of each dedicated moment as we come to it contain clues to our destiny, the intended meaning of our life both to ourselves and to society, and the next steps toward accomplishing it. Our whole hope of taking shape and becoming an ordered and organic whole depends upon our yielding ourselves to these intimations, while we strive to put off all concern for manifest results in the external world and all fear of consequences.

The alternative to a way of such inner honesty is a relapse into the confused, fluid, uncertain, and chaotic state in which we began, amounting to spiritual betrayal, paralysis, and disintegration. If we are to live we must take what we were born with, begin where we are, and struggle to follow the best light we have. Our heredity we cannot escape. Our environment we cannot greatly change. Either we

shape it (or, at least, take a shape in the face of it), or it shapes us.

For well over 60 years I have believed that for a man to take his own shape and direction and to hold it even though it be in the face of a world that does not understand it --indeed, despises and hates it -- is the greatest joy of which his life is capable; it is, at the same time, to meet in full his duty to society and to render to it his farthest-reaching contribution. Wittingly or unwittingly, in so many words or in other words, with one philosophy or another, for well over half a century I have said, "Be what you are. Make your outside match your inside. Be true to your deepest self." I have believed it is right to do this even though it removes a man so far from the life and thought of his day that he seems doomed to die without having made any mark upon it, as long seemed true of Thoreau. I have believed it right to do this even though, for all the love there is in him, he can find no way to go without bringing grief to those who love him. Not only have I believed such a course right, and justifiable at last by the obvious contribution such integrity has made to the unfolding life of men, but I have believed any other course to be wrong, a flight from life, a betrayal of the ultimate meaning of existence not only in oneself but in all other men.

This has been not only my philosophy and my religion: it has also been my practice. Probably even my severest critics would concede this. Before I had anything to say to other people, I struggled to put my deepest conviction and surest insight into my own life.

This has taken me ways I little expected to go when I first began to listen and to obey. I started very much like any ordinary young man: conventional of the conventional and orthodox of the orthodox. But more and more I found my face set in a direction counter to all my age believed in. While the scientist has seen life as struggle for existence, I have seen no meaning in existence unless it had elevation; and for the sake of elevation and quality of life I have striven to be ready even to sacrifice my existence.

While the psychologist has talked much of happiness and has seen life as a matter of "adjustment" to one's environment, commonly meaning concession to it, I have thrown my "happiness" away again and again for the sake of an intangible I couldn't see or lay my hands on or prove: I have preferred to exhaust myself or to be broken in an attempt to transcend my environment, rather than surrender to it.

Editor's Note:

As William Simpson states above, he did not begin his life with the full understanding of its meaning he now has. Instead he started in a very orthodox way, intending from the age of 20 to devote his life to the Christian ministry. With that aim in mind he entered Union Theological Seminary, in New York City, as a scholarship student in the fall of 1912. After graduating magna cum laude three years later, he was offered a position as assistant minister at a prestigious church with a wealthy congregation in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania. He chose instead to begin preaching at a very poor, run-down Presbyterian church in Carteret, New Jersey, a drab mill town.

Very early in his ministerial career he realized that there were important differences between his own faith and the official doctrine of his church.

Nevertheless, he managed to make the necessary compromises, and on February 20, 1917, he was finally ordained a Presbyterian minister, although not without some stormy debates with his superiors. He then resumed his preaching at the church in Carteret.

The compromises he had made worried him more and more as time passed, however. He was beginning to make his way toward the light, but it was a journey which would occupy him for several more years yet. He tells of the ways in which he began to change, some 66 years ago:

I have often wished that I had not made quite the effort I did to get into the Church. After all, there are more people outside than in, and there are other lines of work into which a man can put at least as much dedication as into the ministry. I like the wry comment of Martin Luther: "Ich kann nicht so leise treten." It was not in his nature to "pussy foot."

And it is not in mine, really. While it is true that I had steadily refused to affirm my belief in Jesus' ,virgin birth, and even more in his physical resurrection, I should now think of those days with less distaste if I had made no effort at all to put thoughts and convictions of mine, which I knew very well were contrary to what my examiners required of me, into terms and forms that would allay their suspicion.

However, I found myself a minister at last. And Dr. Henry Sloane Coffin, head of the Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church, one of the most important in New York, and soon to become president of Union Theological Seminary, began to exert himself to get me out of Carteret into some large church, more like the college church at Bryn Mawr which I had previously turned down. He even offered me a place on his own staff. At this time I had probably reached the high-water mark of my career in the Church.

Meanwhile the tide had begun to turn in another direction. Beneath the surface all was not well in my life as a minister. Two articles I read in the Atlantic Monthly about this time both expressed my unrest and added to it. They were by Edward Lewis, who had recently left the ministry of the Congregational Church in England to take to wayside preaching.[1] But it was chiefly my own experience in the ministry that had begun to turn me against it. .

Many things I had to do went against my grain. I did not like being compelled to preach twice every Sunday. Even once every Sunday might have been too much. I resented having to subject my spirit to a clock and to hold forth just because it was a certain hour. I was

[1] "The Failure of the Church," Atlantic Monthly, December 1914; and "The Professional Ministry," Atlantic Monthly, November 1915.

not a spigot thus to be turned on and off in accord with some mechanical arrangement. I began to feel the "bondage of preaching"; and there were times when I returned home on Sunday evening with something akin to nausea, because

I had forced myself and spoken with a show of feeling I did not really have; or perhaps because I had allowed myself to speak at all when in fact I had nothing to say, and my real need was rather to commune with my own soul.

There is nothing upon which a man's spiritual growth and vitality depend more than upon the uttermost sincerity. For him to speak when he does not feel that his God has given him something to say, or to speak with a show of conviction greater than he actually feels, is to do violence to himself. In his soul he lies. The lie may be great or it may be small, but spiritual growth and vigor and significance do not develop in the man who lies in this way at all. For this is lying in relation to his God, in relation to his own innermost being. And that is "the sin against the Holy Ghost," for which there is no forgiveness. The man who violates his own being begins to die. No man ever escapes it.

I am convinced that trifling at this point is the chief reason why ministers as a whole are so dead. I shall never forget the impression that stabbed into me one day, years later, when I walked onto the platform to address a meeting of all the Methodist ministers of Greater New York. As I turned and looked at my audience I seemed to see a crowd of men without faces, of faces covered with masks.

Those masks were the outgrowth of their year-round habit of not saying what they really meant, of constantly allowing themselves to say what they did not mean.

Praying in public offended me in the same sort of way. There were times when I felt like praying, and there were times when I did not feel like praying. And to stand up and go through the motions of praying, just because that was the next thing on the program, seemed to me, if anything, even worse than forcing myself to speak in a way that did not come out of my heart. Moreover, in those days, at least, I yielded a supreme authority to Jesus' mere word, and by all that I could make of what Jesus said about prayer in the Sermon on the Mount the kind of praying I was expected to do in my church services stood condemned.

He said, in effect, "Don't be like the hypocrites, who love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen of men; but when you pray, go into your own room, and having shut the door pray to your heavenly Father secretly. And your Father who seeth in secret shall recompense you." We professed to believe that "your heavenly Father knoweth what things you have need of before you ask him." But if we really believed that, I could not see why we said prayers in public except "to be heard of men." At any rate, more than once I caught myself in the subtle insincerity of preaching at my congregation under the form of a prayer to God!

Also, I was beginning to feel strongly about the moral enormity, as it seemed to me, of our economic system. I saw that the Church in relation to this system was like a "kept woman." In the world of time and space the Church was an institution, which, like any institution, had to pay bills. To get money it catered to those who had money, to those who were getting their money out of "things as they are" and who wanted to keep things that way.

To get money for new and larger buildings, for stained-glass windows, surplices, choirs, and larger salaries for ministers, the Church had sold its soul. It was emphasizing things Jesus never talked about. It was almost entirely silent about the things he lived and died for. The cash connection between the Church's need

of money and the kind of men she got her money from had helped to make her one of the worst enemies of the good of mankind. And the professional minister was its paid retainer. Increasingly I disliked getting my livelihood from an institution of this sort.

There were still other difficulties. But it will be enough to point out, finally, that I simply did not hold the orthodox theological convictions. It is hard to be strictly honest with yourself when you stand to lose by it so much as a minister usually does. Not till I was altogether out did I realize how much of a cast had been put in my eye by my half-subconscious realization that every unorthodox conclusion I reached would damage my prospects for advancement in my profession.

Nevertheless, I came to the place where I not only rejected the dogma of the virgin birth but was very sceptical about the so-called miracles, and I positively did not believe that the body of Jesus the Roman soldiers nailed to the cross ever walked the earth again. Above all, I did not believe that Jesus' death made any difference whatever in the attitude of God toward man. To be sure, in seminary we had been given an interpretation of the significance of Jesus' death that enabled us to go on talking about "the atonement." But it was simply a bald fact that the doctrine thus revised and revamped bore no resemblance to, and had no connection with, the doctrine known down through the centuries as The Atonement.

According to the view of things I had reached, Jesus did not pay any price to God. No price was needed. My God was no Shylock. He did not demand the money on the counter before he delivered the goods of forgiveness. My God was like the sun. He shone upon the good and upon the evil equally. We could turn our backs upon him and walk in the dark if we wanted to, but he was ever ready to flood us again with his light the moment we turned back to him. My God bore no resentment. He forgave not only "seventy times seven," but always - as Jesus evidently believed even man could do, and as I certainly knew I must try to do. Moreover, no one can answer for another or pay the price for another. I am, of course, not denying that what happens to, anyone of us affects at least many others of us. I am not forgetting the extent to which we all are one. But my living, my growing, my dying, are my own. Also I see, or I do not see; and no other man's seeing can possibly make up to me for my own blindness.

The kind of teaching we have had in the orthodox doctrine of the Atonement, to which men's minds and spirits have been exposed through long centuries, has simply cut the taproot of all moral and spiritual endeavor. Jesus is our substitute. He makes up for our shortcomings. He pays the price of admission. He "fixes it up" with God. In consequence men have tended to leave it all to him. The most striking thing about the life of the Christian Church today is the almost complete absence of any wholehearted attempt to put the teaching of Jesus into practice. For the most part, Christians are content merely to cry, "Lord, Lord."

I saw the effect of this in my own preaching. Much of the idealism and moral ardor that came out even more fully in my life some years later was quite apparent even then in my sermons. Sunday after Sunday I would pour out my faith, my hope, and my conviction; and not uncommonly the people would come up and tell me what a fine sermon it was. But they did nothing about it. And naturally

enough, as I see it now. They had been brought up on a teaching which represented that right life was less important than right belief, which almost asserted that the effort to live a right life was futile.

Moreover, while I know now that the teaching of Jesus can be practiced, here and now, it can't be practiced by everybody. It never was intended for everybody. It can be practiced only by those who have the requisite spiritual perception and stamina, qualities that most people do not have. And then, too, for all my earnestness, as I can see now, I was not myself practicing what I preached. I may have been pointing the way, but I was not leading it. And people are not likely to take very seriously a way which even the man who preaches it does not follow. Meanwhile, events in the world were hastening me toward the day when I should be forced to take positions that would drive me to do more than talk, that would give me experience out of which I could talk with more conviction and force than had ever been possible before.

Part 2 of 7 parts

Editor's Introduction:

The trauma of the First World War and the era of rapid social change which followed led many Christians to re-examine their beliefs. What has come to be known as "the social Gospel" gained strength, and new links were forged between Christianity and the political Left.

Indeed, much of the energy --and nearly all of the leaders who were not Jews -- of America's movement toward the Left since the First World War have come from the Christian churches. In the wake of the war churchmen saw a new opportunity and felt a new motivation to restructure society in accord with the ethic of the Sermon on the Mount.

William Simpson had already been feeling his way in this direction during the war, seeking a role for himself which would accord with what he then thought were his own spiritual inclinations. Actually, as he realized later, he was being driven by an impulse which divided his soul and led him down a false path, from which it would take him many years to find his proper way. He writes:

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[This impulse] was absorbed with the lot of the unfortunate, the ill-constituted, the poorly endowed -- that is, with the masses, with the fate of the inferior, rather than with the discovery of superior men, and the problems of giving such men the richest opportunities, the fullest nurture that they (and through them, society) could benefit by, and of causing the proportion of such men constantly to increase. In short, I was animated by my pity and driven and guided by my sympathy. And through it all I was perfectly certain I was

"following Jesus."

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He left the ministry in September 1918, not only having found his own theology incompatible with that of his church, but also having become impatient with the church's hypocrisy in refusing to practice the social doctrine which Jesus had preached.

He had taken a strong stand against America's participation in the war (much to the distress of the elders of his church), and he had formed close friendships during the war with other leading pacifists, among them Roger Baldwin, founder of the American Civil Liberties Union. When Baldwin offered him a position in the fall of 1918 as associate director of that organization (then known as the National Civil Liberties Bureau), he accepted it.

While serving in this position he read a copy of Sabatier's Life of St. Francis of Assisi, and he was greatly moved by it. He felt a strong urge to follow the footsteps of St. Francis and devote his life to serving the poor, but he needed more thought before making such a move.

Other Christians were also searching for a new path, and there were numerous discussion meetings and conferences among them. William Simpson helped organize one of these in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, in December 1918, where he also was one of the principal speakers. But his questions about his own role remained unanswered. He tells of his effort to find his way in the months which followed:

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Upon my return to New York [from Swarthmore] my thought began to work fast, and to a conclusion. That I was not yet ready to act upon either the challenge that had come to me from St. Francis or the one from Muste, [2] I was sure. But I was not running away from either. On the contrary, I found

[2] A.J. Muste (1885-1967) had been a fellow student of Simpson's at Union Theological Seminary. He began as a minister of the Dutch Reformed Church in America but became a Quaker in 1918. He later turned to labor organizing and went on to become one of the leading spokesmen and activists for America's radical Left. He was one of the speakers at the Swarthmore meeting, and his challenge had been to organize a lay Christian order whose task would be the reconstitution of society along Christian lines.

myself wanting to do something to obtain the experience I needed to make decisions wisely.

One thing I had to get cleared up was the part I should take in regard to the whole economic situation. I wanted to find out what people had to do in this country to make a living. I wanted to find out what kind of people they were, just ordinary working people, and how they lived. And I needed to know much more about the organized labor movement .

It had occurred to me sometimes that perhaps I might here find the field of action I was

looking for, and become a labor organizer or propagandist. But I did not want to do any more reading about it, at least not just then; nor did I want to get my impressions as a mere visitor to industrial situations, looking on safely and comfortably from the outside. I decided to become a laborer myself, and to do my best to get a thorough taste of the typical experience of an ordinary American workingman.

Thereupon I handed in my resignation to the Civil Liberties Bureau

I decided to begin with coal mining. On the morning of March 9th, 1919, with five dollars in my pocket, I set out from my home in Elizabeth to hitchhike to Scranton, Pennsylvania

Immediately upon my arrival I began to hunt for work in some coal mine, and for labor leaders with whom I could discuss the social situation in which the close of the war had plunged us. Unemployment and consequent suffering were acute. All the shouting about democracy during the world-convulsion had made many workers think that a little democracy in industry wouldn't be a bad thing. Revolution was in the air.

A man as well-informed as Scott Nearing, [3] once a professor at the University of Pennsylvania, was

[3] Scott Nearing (1883-) taught economics at the University of Pennsylvania from 1906 until 1915, when he was fired for injecting militant Marxism into his lectures at a time when it was not yet fashionable to do so. He became a propagandist and organizer for dozens of Communist organizations and contributed his writings to their publications. In 1928 he was the Communist Party's candidate for governor of New York. Although he was later expelled from the Communist Party for his excessive individualism, he has remained active on behalf of the Marxist cause to the present. He is now in his 100th year.

Simpson came into contact with Nearing through Norman Thomas (1884-1968), the leader of the Socialist Party from 1926 until his death and the U.S. presidential candidate of that party six times. Thomas had graduated from Union Theological Seminary in 1911, the year before Simpson matriculated, and was ordained a Presbyterian minister. He was the minister of the East Harlem Presbyterian Church and the director of the Friendship Neighborhood House, in an Upper East Side slum, in the summer of 1915 when Simpson graduated from Union Theological Seminary.

Simpson worked for Thomas that summer and met many of the Christian activists who were to play a prominent role in the politics of the Left in coming years.

declaring that we should have a revolution within six months. And all the way across the country I found labor leaders who would have agreed with Steve McDonald, the labor leader of Scranton, who told me, "Revolution is sure, and not far off." It was in this atmosphere of bitter discontent and eager hope of some great change for the better that all my experiences of the next few months were cast.

Interesting talks with labor leaders were far easier to find than jobs. Hunt as I would I found nothing. The mines were running only part time, some of them only one or two days in a fortnight, so that for every job there were many applicants, most of them men

with long mining experience. I could have had a job as a carpenter, but the \$35 initiation fee put that beyond my reach. I even applied for a job cleaning sewers, only to learn that that work was not to open till the following month.

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He persevered in his effort to find employment in the mines, however, working for a few days at a construction project in the nearby mountains to replenish his meager funds, and eventually he was hired as a miner's helper. His task was to break up the heavy pieces of coal blasted loose by the miner with whom he worked and then shovel the coal into cars:

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I found the work grueling. After several hours the heavy lifting, the hard shoveling and pitching, taxed me severely, despite the fact that I was constitutionally strong and had hardened myself by two weeks with a man felling trees just before I set out for Scranton. I sweated as I had never sweated before in all my life. Every stitch on me was as wet as though I had been working in water.

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In his first day in the mine he loaded three cars -- between 12 and 15 tons of coal -- for which he was paid 55 cents per car, so that his total earnings for the day were \$1.65. On his best day he loaded five cars. The work was not only dirty and exhausting; it was also extremely dangerous. Before he moved on to Pittsburgh for a stint in a steel mill he had two close calls in the mine.

In Pittsburgh he worked seven days a week, 10 hours a day. The mill was much less strenuous than the mine, however, and the mill workers shirked at every opportunity. Nevertheless, he found that they had much the same attitude toward their work that the miners had -- namely, that it was a necessary evil -- and the mill owner had the same lack of regard for his employees as the mine owner. After two weeks it was time to move on:

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My next objective was the tire factories in Akron, Ohio, the center of the world's tire industry.

While I was still in Pittsburgh I had seen attractive advertisements claiming that there was plenty of work to be had making tires for Firestone, Goodrich, or Goodyear; and I soon learned that such advertisements were published as far away as Chicago, New York, and even Boston. The result was that the labor market in Akron was kept flooded: there were always more applicants than there were jobs. Thus the factories could always skim the cream and let the rest go. And when they wanted to cut wages they could hold over the heads of their employees, as a whip, the threat that if they did not accept the lower wage rates it would be easy to find men on the streets who would.

I had two jobs in Akron. The first was with Firestone as "stock tender," on the night shift. Never before had I turned my sleeping hours into hours of toil. The first night was misery. By morning I almost fell asleep on my feet. I got used to it, of course, but from my experience here and at other places later, I became convinced that the practice of changing shifts every week is needlessly disturbing to all the rhythms of the workers'

lives, and therefore to their comfort, health, and peace of mind

This job I first found myself doing, keeping rolls of rubber sheeting unwound across a table so that the workers could take what they needed readily, was itself enough to put a man to sleep. I felt that a cow would have had brains enough to be trained to do it.

Doubtless by now it has all been made automatic.

I tried to keep myself awake by watching the men around me. The thing that struck me was the monotony of it. Each man had some little operation to add to the construction of a tire. Over and over again, the same little operation for eight hours. One man with a pair of dividers went around the "tread room" marking a line parallel to the rim on each side of each of 400 rotating tires, and he did this four times in eight hours. For his whole working day he did nothing but hold a pair of dividers against first one side and then the other of 1,600 tires -- one simple motion repeated 3,200 times a day: day after day, week after week, month after month, till he could endure it no longer, and quit.

Presently I noted what subsequent observation amply confirmed, that all the men on the floor were young. There was not one I should have guessed to be over 35, and most of them were between 20 and 30. And no wonder: older men could never have stood the pace. They soon would have been weeded out. Perhaps they were never even taken on. After all, there was no need to hire them. There were plenty of young ones to choose from.

This pace! I After all the loafing I had seen in the steel mill, I could hardly believe my eyes as I watched how the men all about me worked. The tempo over the entire floor was snap, jerk, jump. Never before had I seen men work under such nervous tension. It was uncanny. I could but wonder what made them do it. Presently I found out.

It was the "speed up" system. I was myself caught up in it for the first time when I got my job "finishing" tires in the Goodrich plant. The methods used varied to some extent from factory to factory, but everywhere it was a device for making the workers race with a machine, with one another, or with both. By a stop watch, measuring to the fraction of a second, the employers would take the time required by one of their fastest workers to go through a certain operation, or "piece." That was made the standard for all the workers, and all the workers were pressed to come up to it.

Or they would increase the amount of work involved in the piece, without raising the piece wage rate. This made it necessary for the men to work with greater intensity in order to earn the same income. One man told me that whereas 32 cents had once been paid for "finishing" alone, 32 cents was then being paid for making the whole tire

I could hardly find a single man who liked his job. Almost invariably they spoke of its monotony. Occasionally a man would say, "Aah, I don't mind so long as I'm kept busy," though that was hardly the same as saying he liked it. And the men's reactions were to more than the nervous tension and the inhuman tedium. There were also the fumes of the benzene and the rubber cement used in building up the tires. The air reeked with them. Nearly all the men, I discovered, had been there only two to six months and had not yet had time to feel the effects of these poisons. The one man I found who had been there five years was yellow ("almost looked like a tire," as an I.W.W. [4] member put it) "Piece work kills!" That is what a little group of I.W.W.s said about it one night that I spent talking with them in a small tenement room far into the morning. The general belief seemed to be that three years in the rubber business finishes a man. The speed-up system was a diabolically ingenious device for turning the blood of the workers into gold.

The rubber companies picked the best men, sucked the life out of them, and then threw them onto the scrap pile. They did not need to worry about what happened to them after that. The men might starve, or their children might starve or grow up stunted and weakly from malnutrition. But that did not

[4] Industrial Workers of the World ("Wobblies"): a radical, syndicalist labor union which flourished between 1905 and the early 1920's and was noted for its extreme militance.

matter. The far-flung advertisement of "work in the tire factories" had not failed of its aim. The streets of Akron were full of young men. From these the companies could continue to pick what they wanted. Somebody else could worry about those whom they had wrecked.

Yes, the words of the young I.W.W.s were full of venom. They hated the tire factories and all their works. They hated the hours hunger compelled them to spend inside their walls, and they looked upon each shift as eight hours in which they were forced every day to relinquish their freedom and go into a penitentiary. They hated the system of spies by which the owners attempted to ferret out every labor organizer, that they might get rid of him -- by which, in fact, they had sometimes wormed their way into the very head office of the local union. But, above all, they hated the speed-up system, which forced them, for the sake of a paltry subsistence, to race at an inhuman pace not only with the machine but against their fellow workers.

They saw things through inflamed eyes, I allow. I realized that before I had left Akron. Things were not so bad as they pictured them -- not quite. But nearly. Their attitude, on the whole, represented only the natural and healthy reaction of any human being with intelligence and a sense of his worth against being used, treated as a commodity -- against being harnessed to a machine in a way that violated every instinct in him. They hated, and they did well to hate, having their very life coined into another's gold

In Cleveland I found 30,000 to 50,000 men out of work. As there seemed little chance of a job, I pressed on to Toledo.

But Toledo was even worse. In this smaller city 20,000 men and women were out on strike. To look for a job was declared futile. What depressed me more than this was the conversation I had with some Socialists at their Toledo headquarters. I had been talking with labor leaders and going to labor meetings ever since I first reached Scranton, to see what they revealed as to the workers' aims and methods, their view of the situation that confronted them, and of life in general, for I was wondering if I should cast in my lot with them.

One of the questions I unvaryingly asked was, "What do you think of violence?" For upon their answer to this I believed my ability to work with them must largely depend. Almost without exception the reply had been, in effect, "We don't like it. We'll never be the ones to start it. But if it is used against us, we'll use it in return." There was little evidence of principle in the attitude; it was primarily a matter of expediency. But even the militant I.W.W.s in Akron, while they declared themselves ready to use violence, were only girding themselves for what they believed the capitalists' inevitable use of it against

them.

Those Socialists in Toledo, however, seemed positively gleeful over the prospect of violence. They had scores of 20 years' standing to settle, and they looked forward eagerly for the chance to get the capitalists down and kick them in the face. My arguments against violence and revenge they only thought "would spoil a good revolution." They spoke disparagingly of Scott Nearing's pamphlet, then just published, in opposition to violence on the part of labor, and they sneered at his "dear love of comrades." They seemed lacking in any fine sense of anything.

I arrived in Detroit late the same day feeling depressed and desolate. My pocketbook was getting pretty flat, and I had hardly eaten since breakfast. To save money I even thought of sleeping somewhere on the ground. But I finally settled on a cot in the hallway of a cheap hotel, and I was comfortable enough. But with the words of those Toledo Socialists running through my head it was a long time before I got to sleep

My special interest in Detroit was in the Ford plant, and in a few days I was at work operating a six-point. multiple drill press, which bored holes into the edge of the yoke of the Ford generator. In 15 minutes I had learned how to do what was expected of me, and after an hour's practice could work the press at least as fast as the old hand by my side. I had to drill perhaps 800 yokes a day. The work was not heavy, but the speed, if kept up for a long time, as it often was when the yokes came fast and steadily, was a bit tiring. I soon learned that I was in one of the easier departments. In many of them the work was heavy, and the machines timed so exactly that a man had to work at full speed all day to keep up. Even in my own department there were jobs more objectionable than mine. The fellow next to me had to thread each of the holes I drilled, a total of several thousand a day

It was while working at my drill press that I came really to understand why the Akron I.W.W.s had referred to the hours they spent in the tire factories as so much penitentiary life. As soon as the novelty of the job wore off -- and that did not take long -- I found that each morning my heart sank as I went to work. My eight hours I drearily endured, until, when at last it was time to quit, my spirit leaped like a bird that suddenly finds the door of its cage thrown open. All day long I felt chained, walled in, dead, myself like a machine going through motions.

I could not get free from that machine. I might leave it for a minute, but I must be back at once. There was no opportunity for thought. The work itself required none, and yet it required just enough attention to prevent thought about anything else: if I let my mind wander to fields of interest, I broke my drills. Nor could I talk. The din of the machines was such that I could make myself heard by my nearest buddy only by leaning toward him as far as I could stretch and yelling to him at the top of my voice. For the most part a man's eight hours a day were spent walled up inside himself, without any real self-expression, obeying not some impulse from within, as is natural to every living creature and the need for the unfolding of its life, but instead the prod and imperious command of an external and utterly alien taskmaster. For eight hours a day his natural human instincts were blocked, and living impulse compressed into the hard, rigid, mechanical effort to be part of a speeding machine.

Doubtless I suffered under this work more intensely than most of the men who have become numbed by it, but then my suffering was relieved by the prospect of becoming free in a few days, whereas they had to face that sort of thing without hope of an end.

Then, too, I had a purpose in the work, whereas they were doing it merely to get a pay envelope. In any case, I doubt if there were more than a handful of men in the whole factory, with its huge army of employees, who did not resent every hour they spent in such subjection to a machine.

Onedily I asked the man beside me how he liked his job. "Oh," he said, "when I was in the Army I thought I could never come back to it. But here I am." "Well, how do you like it?" I persisted. "Oh, it's not so bad -- no worse than it used to be." "But that isn't what I asked you," I still persisted, "how do you like it?" "Like it? Of course, nobody likes it, but ...," with a shrug of the shoulders that said, "You've got to earn a living somehow, and there's nothing for it but to take what you can get."

Evenings that my shift did not require me to be at work I often spent with Chet Emerson [5] and his friends. Commonly we discussed my venture; and I made much the same criticism of the capitalist system and held up much the same kind of society to take its place as might have been expected from a

[5] Chet Emerson was a friend of Simpson of several years' standing, with whom he stayed during his time working for Ford. In 1919 Emerson was the minister of a large Congregational church in Detroit. Later he became dean of the cathedral in Cleveland.

Socialist or an I.W.W. My social philosphy at the time inclined to be strongly collectivist. Yet I had my doubts and questions. And some of these were strengthened by the answers of Chet's friends

One day Chet and I, and a couple he had taken out to dinner, had a violent argument about the new social order. And afterwards the wife, who at first had almost scoffed at my venture, said to me quietly, "I am beginning to get your point of view. I don't agree entirely, but I am beginning to understand." And another day I drove straight at Chet with the question, "How can you fairly condemn the violence of the working class in their efforts to attain their ideals and what they believe to be justice, when for ends certainly no more noble you have sanctioned the violence of war?" When I returned home a couple of hours later, he was still in a brown study over that question.

Nevertheless, my own answers to a great many of the problems were far from certain; and as I at last found myself rolling on toward Chicago, I too was lost in thought about where the truth and the right really lay. Not about the capitalist system. In my rejection of that, thus far, I never wavered. But how to get rid of it without violence? And how to get a really beautiful social order when the overwhelming mass of the people, at the bottom, at the top, and throughout, were so full of greed and fear and hate -- in general, so self-centered? ...

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He remained in Chicago only until he had earned enough money -- at three dollars a day in the stockroom of a department store -- to be able to travel further. His next stop was the open-pit iron mines of the Mesabi Range. During his work at a mine in Eveleth, Minnesota, he came to know his fellow workers better than he had in his previous stops:

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Here as everywhere, all the way across the country, I could not find a single man who liked his job. One day I asked a brakeman about it -- and braking is one of the easiest jobs in the "open pit." "Like my job? No! But yo' gotta work anywhere you go. Hell! What's the difference!" Another day I asked Aleck, who talking about quitting and how often he quit his jobs, "Why do you change jobs so often?"

His mind worked slowly, especially at finding reasons and making generalizations, but finally he blurted out, "Why do I quit? Well, I'll tell you. I just get so gosh darned sick of my job that I can't stand it another minute! That's why I quit!"

Thus also Gus, another one of the men, who had just quit. So I felt. So did Tom, a Greek from Athens trying in vain to save enough money to bring his wife and child to America. He had just "blown" a whole year's savings on "wine, women, and song" and was resigned to his fate as a perpetual victim.

To me it was appalling that so few men should have any joy in their work. My experience seemed to give evidence that for most of the working people of the country life had become one long endurance: work, eat, and sleep was almost all they had time for. Their work, on which they used up the best they had in them, they loathed. It was no wonder the older ones had become numb and leathery.

When I thought of Tom and the fate that seemed ahead of him, my heart ached. In a little while I should be getting out of it. But he would go on -- had to go on -- in utter hopelessness. "Tom," I said to him once, in rather a weak move to give him some heart, "it may be only 20 years till we have a revolution." "Jesus Christ," he exclaimed, "20 years? Too long! I dead by that time!"

It was that "had to go on," I discovered, that utter inability to get out of it, that constituted the essence of "wage slavery." When I first set out on my venture, though I had used the phrase, I had not really known what it meant. The slavery was not in the fact that the work was hard: it was in the fact that in order to exist men like those about me had to sell themselves into the will and hand of another, for his profit.

The machine was fast destroying the last remnants of the old craftsmanship, which in an earlier period had meant not only livelihood, but dignity, responsibility, self-expression, a free space for the development of personality. But now all that was gone. The machines, generally too costly to be owned by individuals, were owned by corporations or by a few rich men. Most men had become mere "hands," with nothing to sell but their labor, and no means of living without selling it.

Their "freedom" was no more than a freedom to choose which master they would slave for. They might work for A or they might work for Z, but they could work for neither A nor Z except on the condition that they let him exploit them. There was no way to escape. There was no way to exist without a job; and the jobs were in the hands of men who owned; and their ownership was maintained by all the organized violence of society: laws, courts, prisons, police, and if necessary even the militia, with its bayonets, poison gas, and bombing planes.

In one way this new slavery, wage slavery, was even worse than chattel slavery. When a man owned a slave outright, it paid him to take care of that slave, even as he took care of any other piece of property, even as he took care of his horse and cow. But the wage slave the modern employer could work under conditions that ruined him, and when there was no longer any more to be got out of him he could fire him and let him live or die on

the labor scrap pile. It was easy to find another man to take his place, even though the newcomer knew that the same fate probably awaited him.

The employer did not need to have, and commonly did not have, any sense of responsibility for the men who worked for him, not the sense of responsibility he had for the mules on his property, or for his inanimate machines. To replace them cost money; but after you had wrecked a man you could get another one to wreck simply by putting up a sign, "Man Wanted."

And yet, when it came to making any constructive effort to remedy matters, the men at Eveleth were a supine lot. Possibly this was because Eveleth, from the point of view of industrial despotism, was the worst on the Iron Range. The Oliver Iron Mining Company owned the whole town and kept an iron heel on its neck. Anybody who opposed it was run out. I was told that in 1916, when the men were pretty well organized, the strike they attempted was broken by the company's importing scabs all the way from Chicago and by the deputy sheriffs' picking off the leaders. At one time, when the movement threatened to get out of hand, the deputies raided the houses where the leaders lived, shot and killed two of them and wounded a third. And nothing was ever done about it.

There were I.W.W.s in town, but I had difficulty in finding them, and their position seemed to me completely futile. A strike they attempted to pull off on the Fourth of July proved a sheer fiasco. They had some automatics and ammunition and were ready to fight, but that sort of resistance at that stage in the game would have been suicide.

I never joined the Wobblies. Of all the labor organizations I came across I liked them best: they were the most intelligent, fearless, and dedicated. And yet I had to confess that I was not enthusiastic over the idea of a social order to be built by the rank and file of the I.W.W.s I had met.

Meanwhile, through all the weeks I was on the Iron Range I went on wrestling with my own problem of what was to be my part and my place in the unfolding drama of my age

Shortly after I arrived I was leaning against the steam shovel during one of our breathing spells, thinking. I felt very certain that an intensification of the class war was not the way to go after the new social order I wanted to see. It was one thing to accept the fact of the class war as an actual and inevitable result of our existing economic system. It was quite another thing to preach it as the means to accomplish our purpose.

A striking sentence or two in Bertrand Russell's *Proposed Roads to Freedom* was running through my mind and had reinforced my determination not to join the I.W.W. He declared that the "habit of hatred" among the working class, engendered by the class war, would remain and would attach itself to something else, and so perhaps make impossible the very fraternity on which the full success of Labor's cause depended. "There is no alchemy," he said, "by which a universal harmony can be produced out of hatred. Those who have been inspired to action by the doctrine of the class war will have acquired the habit of hatred, and will instinctively seek new enemies when the old ones have been vanquished."

In my eyes the whole struggle between Labor and Capital was full of evil: hate, vengeance, greed, a ruthless determination to have and to hold, to get and to keep. Sometimes I was impressed with the evil on one side, sometimes with the evil on the other. But on both sides it was largely a matter of Force organizing to impose its will on a broken antagonist. It seemed to me I did not belong on either side. I wondered whether

my true place might not be between the lines. I wanted to do something that would make for increased understanding and sympathy on both sides

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After he left the Iron Range he laid track for the Northern Pacific Railroad, worked in a copper mine in Montana, and cut trees in Washington. And as 1919 drew to a close he began drawing a few conclusions:

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How far my thinking had taken me by this time is revealed in the letter which, following the practice I had begun at the time of my first serious departures from the beaten track, I sent out to friends and relatives under date of December 31st, 1919. [6] It was essentially an analysis of the industrial situation and an announcement of my earliest conclusions as to the part I should take in relation to it.

I reminded my friends that when I set out to work my way across the country I had thought I might find my place in the organized labor movement; and I declared that the I.W.W.s especially had called forth my admiration, not only for the economic soundness that lay behind their attempt, in an industrial society, to organize the workers by industries rather than by crafts, but also for their devotion to their cause; their openness to toilers of any class, color, or creed; and for the reliance they placed on education and organization rather than on naked violence.

But I could not close my eyes to the fact that, nevertheless, between workers and employers, it was an issue of power, in which each side was trying to impose its will on its foe by one or another kind of force. This was the very essence of the class war, and I believed it had arisen out of and was an inextricable part of the capitalist system.

Unequivocally I declared "that the class war exists whether I like it or not, that class consciousness arises out of the motives and antagonism engendered by the capitalist system, and

6 A slightly revised version of the letter was published anonymously in the March 18, 1920, issue of the Quaker journal *The Friend*, under the title "View of the New World."

that there can be no brotherhood on this earth with any change that stops short of a complete abolition of this soulless institution."

But to recognize class war as a fact was one thing, to sanction it as a means was quite another. I could not accept the deliberate spread and intensification of class consciousness, by which a man's human sympathies were calloused and his understanding narrowed into a hard, self-righteous set against all those, whether capitalist or fellow worker, who did not stand with him.

And I saw that the strike, and especially the general strike, for all it was obviously the revolutionary worker's most effective weapon, was nevertheless a weapon, a means of coercion, a kind of holdup of all society, by which a determined and united minority could force its will upon the real majority. It wasn't even democracy, let alone the

teaching of Jesus. There was no effort toward reconciliation; and its brotherhood, for all it was more inclusive than that of the Church, still stopped short at the capitalist. Its spirit was one of judgment, reprisal, and autocratic self-will.

All this raised again the very same question I had had to face in relation to the war.

Suddenly I saw that the capitalists were the German Junkers; and the labor movement was the Allies fighting (or claiming to fight) for democracy, the rights of small nations, and an end of the war. The form the issue took was new and different, but the issue itself was the same. It was the old question of means. Be the ends never so good, was it possible to attain such ends by means that were incompatible with them?

I could not believe it. I saw that the force a man released upon the world was not so much his ideal, the thing he aimed at, which remained hidden in his head, but the means he chose by which to move toward his ideal, the things he actually did in pursuit of his objective. I had been certain that when the "idealistic American soldier went "over the top" and tried to plunge his bayonet into the Kaiser-supporting German, what the German reacted to was not the ideal but the bayonet.

The forces let loose on the world by an immoral means hardened human hearts against the very ideals for which the immoral means was resorted to. As a result the world's idealism had failed to get any real hearing at the Peace Conference. And similarly in the class war, I was convinced that out of all the coercion, the lust for material possessions, the fear and hate and disregard for others that such a struggle involves, there could come no good.

The danger was that the change of system, already upon us, would bring only a change of masters, that in some new form the old tyrannies and wrongs that distressed us then would last on to distress us in the future. In short, though I was tremendously concerned that the change should come, I was even more concerned as to how it came. Once more it was that terribly searching question of method, over which, from the beginning, the mounting life of man has fallen.

And then I exclaimed:

"Is it not plain to all who have been given the eyes of the spirit that another battle is joined: an overhead battle, which overshadows in its significance even the struggle of the classes -- a battle between a Wrong and a Right that have their representatives in the ranks both of Labor and of Capital -- another 'death-grapple in the darkness between old systems and the Word': between the way of the world and the way of the Cross? And until this battle is won, until men learn to win their struggles and build their societies by those principles which are the principles of the Sermon on the Mount, the triumphs of the Allied armies, the victories of the working class, and the changes of system, are all futile. They are a mirage of delusion.

"In our burning eagerness to reach our goal we are always seeking a shortcut, even if it be by a temporary transgression of the moral order. We think it will pass unnoticed because it is brief, or that we can atone for it by a renewed devotion to the Right in more salubrious days. We would cut the Gordian Knot, and the sword we choose with which to hack it through is the sword of crushing Might. But it will not work. It never has worked. It never can work

"Nor can there be any exception for the social structure that Labor would build today.

What cannot be accomplished now by Love cannot be accomplished now at all

"None of us can be reminded too often as we begin to line up on the momentous issues of

our day that in all the universe no truth is more inexorable than this: that there is a moral order from the reach of which no phase of human life can escape, an eternal Right and Wrong of things which none can trifle with or defy without coming at last to disaster. Good intentions will not get us by. Ignorance will not excuse us. It applies as relentlessly to a social order or a nation as to an individual. The judgment may be a long time coming, but it always comes."

Today I could not talk thus about the "moral order of the universe" or "an eternal Right and Wrong"; nor, I am afraid, could I so sweepingly reject all use of force. But that was my position then, and of course it put me outside the labor movement. I saw that for me the labor movement was another blind alley, like the Church, a way closed to me, a way that could not take me anywhere. But I must be certain that this disability did not become an excuse for evading the issue. If that way was closed to me, I must strive to find some other way that would really cut into life and be an adequate channel for my thought and aspiration and devotion.

If I could not take sides in the war between the classes or find my place in one of the regular and established movements for social endeavor, it but pressed upon me the harder to find some way in which I could throw myself into that "other battle" where the sides were drawn on other than class lines. And for nearly a year this remained my primary problem. What could I do? What could I throw myself into?

Now, one of the conclusions to which my analysis of our economic situation had forced me was this: that even more than we needed any external change, any change in our economic and political arrangements, we needed a new kind of man on the earth. I felt that our institutions were only a reflection of the character and intelligence of the people who composed them. As water would not rise higher than its source, so one could not expect any society to prove more ideal than the human element from which it sprang. Start it as ideal as one might, in the long run the people would drag it down to their own level.

And so I felt that Tolstoy was dead right when, in his "Appeal to Social Reformers:" he said that most of the world-improvers were like a man trying to make a fire with wet sticks. The man seemed to believe that if only he could find the right arrangement of the sticks, they would burn. The truth was that no matter how he arranged them he would never get a fire, until first he got the sticks dry.

And so with the problem of a better social order: until somehow we had more intelligence, higher character, but above all more true love for one another, all the alterations of external arrangement would prove futile. The new forms would but hide the old evils, which in time would surely crop out to plague us as before, and would continue to plague us till we became different men, a different kind of men.

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There is perhaps some risk of misunderstanding in cutting off this selection at a point where the author is still describing his sympathies as they were more than 60 years ago. The reader who needs reassurance that William Simpson's thinking developed beyond that of some of his illustrious fellow graduates of Union Theological Seminary, such as Norman Thomas and A. J. Muste, should read *Which Way Western Man?*, in which he brilliantly sets forth the conclusions of a lifetime of observation, analysis, and reflection. Those conclusions are markedly different from many of the ideas which he held as a

young man in 1919.

The great value in these autobiographical selections is that they allow one to follow in detail the spiritual and ideological- evolution of an extraordinarily sensitive and thoughtful man as he strives toward the light. Then, when he finally reaches the light, it is all the more illuminating for one who was able to climb with him from the darkness.

Part 3 of 7 parts

Editor's Introduction:

In the last excerpt from his autobiography which appeared in these pages, we left William Simpson at the beginning of 1920 with the realization that a life as a radical labor organizer was not for him. His work experiences among the laborers in America's mines and mills had convinced him that the country's economic system and social order were utterly un-Christian, but he refused to employ the equally un-Christian means of class warfare, with its concomitant violence and class hatred, in an attempt to build a Christian society. He believed that the means must not contradict the end.

In the summer of 1920 he retreated to a tiny, uninhabited island in the St. Lawrence River, in order to read, meditate, and decide on the future course of his life:

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So here, in the midst of the pine grove, I pitched my tent and settled myself for what was to prove one of the most momentous months of my life.

Indeed, I approached it with a certain tremulous expectancy. As I read Matthew Arnold's "The Buried Life" one of my first evenings on the island, there came over me the deeply reverent and wistful feeling that at last I was going to know what it was really to live. The holds that had held me back were slipping loose. The work of which for nearly ten years I had dreamed and which for nearly ten years I had thrust from me and avoided -- that work, my work, the work God had made me for and for which I had slowly been freeing myself ever since I left the Church -- that work I was about to begin. At 28 I, the real I, was going to begin to live.

Yet the significance of that month did not lie chiefly in any new decisions. For the most part I was pretty well settled in my mind before I set foot on the island as to what I should do. I was going to part with all I possessed; I was going to earn my living with my hands, probably as a carpenter; I was going to seek a way to identify myself with the common people; and I was going to reject the State. That month of solitude was to prove significant chiefly as a time when I consolidated my positions and sought strength for the crucial period of action that lay ahead

My determination to give away all that I owned had several roots. On the one hand I found myself unhappy living in security if not in comfort while others in the world had not enough to eat and no place to lay their heads. Moreover, I was convinced that the simple, fundamental, and inescapable reason that most people had so very little of this world's goods was that some others had so very much

And yet again, by giving away all I had I wished to express my utter scorn of that passion

for possessions, with their so-called security and power, which for most men then as now were the supreme and primary objects of their lives. Beginner though I still was in the things of the spirit, I felt within me a security that was quite beyond the reach of the worst blows that hostile men or adverse circumstances could rain upon me. The real citadel of my life was not in what I had but in what I was. And of that citadel I, and I alone, was the keeper. Not what men might do to me, but what I chose to do myself, only that could make or mar my real life...

And Jesus, it must be remembered, was still really my only teacher. Indeed, the word "teacher" cannot convey what he was to me. It was as though I were under his spell. He had captured my imagination as had no one else in all my life. Any philosophizing to the contrary notwithstanding, I inclined to take as truth whatever it could be shown he had said. And had he not said, "If any man comes unto me and does not part with all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple"?

Had he not conditioned real life on loving one's neighbor as oneself; and was it not an obvious denial of equal love to one's neighbor to hug to oneself even the coat on one's back if another man had need of it?

Had he not sent out his disciples without purse or penny, or even bread for their journey, counseling them the while against laying up treasures or being anxious for the morrow? Had he not taught his disciples to give to everyone who asked of them, and from him who would borrow of them not to turn away; and had he not replied to the rich young man, "If, thou wouldst be perfect, go and sell all that thou hast and give to the poor, and then come and follow me"?

At the time I had no other precedent to sustain me. But his was enough. It was idle to try to tell me that Jesus was an Oriental and spoke in hyperbole, or that he was a poet and not to be taken literally, or that his world was very different from ours and that, therefore, a teaching which went very well in Palestine 2,000 years ago or in Italy in the Middle Ages simply could not be put into practice in the complex, industrial, scientific world of our day. For me Jesus' teaching was no "interim ethic." I believed he had spoken to be understood and that he had meant just what he said; and behind this conviction I had the support of the life Jesus lived and his disciples lived with him, and the further conviction of my own soul that what he had said -- above all his "hard sayings," the part everybody was most anxious to explain away but which I was most set on taking seriously -- was every bit of it literally true and absolutely sound.

I could not see any reason in the world why this teaching could not be put into practice by anyone who was willing to take the consequences of practicing it. In any case, nothing but living it could save it. That no one really believed in it any more was obvious. And if men went on much longer merely crying, "Lord, Lord," but not even attempting to do what "the Lord" so plainly said, sooner or later his teaching would pass away.

So I too, out of my conviction that it was the truth and out of my consequent devotion to it, would quite literally part with all I possessed. The things I used would be to me as though lent. I would give anything I had to anyone who needed it or wanted it. I would unlearn the meaning of "mine" and "thine." ...

I wanted again to draw close to the common life of humanity from which somehow I and my kind had become separated. My heart reached out to all those in need -- the oppressed, the poor, the outcast, those of alien race and unsavoury reputation. I was resolved, also, as I had opportunity, to identify myself with those who were being

wronged

The current of Marxist thought, together with my experience in the world of Labor, had left me very much an environmentalist in my social philosophy, and a romantic as well. By nature the people themselves were all right. The dull wit, low taste, and nasty character so common in the populace were to be traced primarily to denial of opportunity

Jesus' cry, both to himself and to his disciples, was: "Be true! Be true! Let the light in you come out, without ceasing! Be the salt that you are!" And there was some sure instinct in me that made me believe, even then, that in the long run the deepest-cutting and farthest-reaching contribution of which any man's life was capable was to be realized by his living out fully the life that really belonged to him.

His effect might not be great, even so: having a great effect is not something that is given to every man. But great or small, the most significant effect any man was capable of would come from his simply being what he really was. In the last analysis, every man's supreme gift was himself. Let him but allow his God to walk the earth in him as he would, even as Jesus did. The rest would take care of itself.

What would come of it all, that I did not know. How can any man know the effect his life is going to have, or even what effect it is having at any given time? Whether I was right or wrong, whether much would come of my venture or nothing, to the end that remained my gamble. Whether we like it or not, we either succumb to our doubts when they become torturing enough, or we live by our faith. And I had a faith. I believed in man -- or, if you prefer (it all comes to the same thing), in God. I believed in the possible and unpredictable significance of one man. I knew what had flowed from Jesus and St. Francis and Tolstoy and many another ...

Organization would never save the world and lead it to the promised land, I said to myself, nor money, nor books, nor buildings, nor technics, but a man would, men would, one man after another going the old way of faithfulness even unto death

By this time it must have become apparent to anyone with the eye of insight that at least two motives were at work in me, which did not really go together and could not be held together for long. On the one hand, there was all that had leaped within me as I read the life of St. Francis and through him came to a fresh vision of a new and different Jesus. It was largely a love that went out to all men and drew me close to them and made me want to spend myself for them. It sprang from a direct intuitive perception. It was simple, childlike, and overflowed from the heart. And it was unpretentious, unself-conscious, predominantly positive, and free from ulterior motives. It was this impulse that I had become aware of first, and I believe it was the deepest in me.

But it was overlaid by all that made me a rebel, a reformer, and an intellectual. There was Christianity (as distinguished from Jesus), with its pity for the weak and the botched, with its ruinous doctrine of equality, with its moralizing and its moral rules (the new Judaism), with its lust for reform, for making converts, for changing people, and for "bringing in" the Kingdom of God.

And I had in me, besides, all the effects of academic intellectualizing, which constantly strives to put life in leading strings to reason. One must have understanding of oneself and explanation of oneself that is acceptable to the mind. Conduct must have a rationale. One must not act until one can show the reasons for such action, even though, Tolstoy-like, they be numbered down almost to 50.

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He returned to his parents' home in Elizabeth, New Jersey. to put his affairs in order and to dispose of all of his belongings. He kept only one suitcase of clothes and personal effects, and his carpenter's tools. He decided to begin his Franciscan life in Carteret, the drab New Jersey mill town where he had once been a Presbyterian minister:

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It was October 19th, 1920, that I kissed my mother goodbye, my mother whose love, I knew, reached out to me with her whole being and who struggled so hard not to let me see her anguish. I walked out the door and down the steps of the old home, down the street where I had played when I was a boy, and on to the center of the town, where I got the trolley to Carteret. And shortly after, with my bag and my kit of tools, I arrived there, penniless.

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It was not a comfortable situation into which he had placed himself. He intended to give his labor, as an offering of love, to anyone who needed it; and to take nothing for himself except that which was freely given in charity, and then only enough to meet his daily needs. But the people of Carteret did not greet him with open arms. Most were indifferent to him; and some, suspicious of his motives, were hostile.

Nevertheless, he persevered: he shoveled snow from people's side-walks without being asked or waiting for payment; he reconditioned a chicken house for a farmer and built a porch for someone else; and gradually he gained a grudging acceptance, not only in Carteret but also in South Amboy and other nearby towns, where he also offered his services.

Soon after he began this new life he felt an urge to speak to the people about the things which were in his heart. He began in South Amboy:

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I tried to get a permit for street-speaking, but I was refused. Religion, I was told, was dangerous stuff. One could never tell what it might lead to. As I anticipated that this would mean an effort to speak without a permit and, likely, jail, I went home to get in a little farewell visit with my family first. I did not breathe a word of what might be just ahead

When I arrived back in Amboy, about five o'clock Saturday evening, no one was on the streets. I tried, therefore, to make myself think that I was relieved of the necessity of speaking. But that would not go down: probably people were at supper and would be out in an hour or so. I went to the railroad station to keep warm while I waited, and left my bag with the ticket agent.

Other men were in the station, and to some of them I really felt moved to speak. But I could not. Had only one of them asked me a question, or revealed that he had some need! But to try to talk to them when I did not know that they wanted it seemed like forcing myself upon them. Anyhow, I simply did not know what to say to them or how to establish a point of contact. No -- I could not do it.

So I got my bag and went out, thinking to go home. But I found some people on the streets by this time. And, feeling I must make another try, I left my bag at an A&P store. Then I walked up and down the street, stopping now beside this group, now beside that, but always finding that my courage failed me.

I went back to the station. A large crowd was on the platform waiting for a train. Here, I thought, was my chance. I would walk up and down the platform once, and then I would begin. But I couldn't. I'd walk up and back once more. But still I could not get my mouth to utter the first words. And then the train came and took the people all away.

Disgusted with myself and sick at heart over my failure I got my bag for the second time and started out to the farm. But I found that if I could not make my tongue speak, no more would my conscience let my feet take me home till I did.

So I returned to the main street, and there on a corner stood a group of five fellows. I took my place beside them, near enough to hear what they were saying. This established a human contact that I had lacked before. And as I sensed the emptiness of their lives and the poverty of their souls, I forgot my fear. I felt an impulse rising within me. And then, before I knew it, I stepped into a gap in their circle and said quietly, "You won't mind if I ask you a question, will you?"

"No!" they said, as they all fixed their eyes upon me.

"Well -- how many of you have found happiness in life?"

An expression of hopelessness seemed to break from them all, as some of them exclaimed, with a sick, hollow laugh, "Not I!"

"Well, I have," I said, and went on to tell them how.

They bantered me for a while, but gradually became more serious, and we talked about the deepest things of life. I did not press matters. If they seemed to want to change the subject, I went with them. But they would keep coming back, interested in spite of themselves. They asked about this Inner Kingdom that had already come and would always come in anyone who hears the voice of God within and surrenders to it his all; and who, under the spell of this spirit of love, forgets himself in his love for others.

They asked about my way of life, seeming unable quite to believe that I really gave my work free, and that I was in earnest when I declared that all I had was no less theirs.

Perhaps it was to test my sincerity that one of them finally took five dollars of the ten I offered them -- all I had

When I made a move to start home, they urged me not to be in a hurry .

And when at last I did break from them, before I got out of town I found one of them waiting for me at a street corner, and we talked another half hour about life. Quite a little of it was about sex relations, which had also been the subject of very earnest conversation while I was with the group.

The next afternoon, upon my return to Amboy, I felt I should seek my friends of the night before. John Bannon, the fellow who had followed me, I found in the depot, along with three or four others. A chance remark of one of them gave me my opportunity, and we all talked together for about an hour and a half. Before I left John asked me if I wouldn't come and talk with the fellows in the pool hall the next night, at about nine o'clock, after the movies.

The next night I was there at nine o'clock. For perhaps half an hour we just chatted and watched the games. But presently a question was asked, bystanders were drawn in, and soon we had a group large enough to interfere with those playing pool. It was a rough

crowd, mostly of Irish Catholics, many of them very bigoted. At first some tried to shock me or to make me a joke or to browbeat me. But I laughed with them when they threw jibes, and tried with gentle reasoning to turn the point of their dislike when they called me "hypocrite." The two bitterest Catholics, who did their best to corner me, finally gave up in disgust, as though I were hopeless and not worth bothering with anyway. But later I noticed them on the edge of the crowd, one of them listening very attentively.

The crowd asked questions about everything: the voice within; the possibility of feeling love for all men, even for Germans and personal enemies; what one would do if one's mother were attacked by a ruffian; about "heaven" and "hell"; about prayer and the Church; about sexual purity; and many other things. They kept it up, the crowd increasing toward the end, until 11:15. Then I went home, but not until they had urged me to come down the next night -- and to come early.

I was there the next night at seven o'clock. This time the talk turned to economics, yet we had some very earnest thought.

The night following I felt led to go to a prayer-meeting in the Presbyterian church. Only a scant dozen people were present, and they listened very listlessly, save for one or two, so that I was moved to say, wistfully, that there was danger lest the fellows in the pool hall enter into the Kingdom of God ahead of us. And I told them how those fellows had talked with me most earnestly about the deepest things of life, literally by the hour. But they did not like it.

On the way home I stopped in at the pool hall, thinking to stay only a few minutes. But one of the boys at once called me over, and soon I was again the center of an eager group of questioners. The crowd grew till we so interfered with the pool players that we had to move. I stayed till 11 o'clock.

I went to the pool hall each night that week. About Thursday one of the most earnest of the crowd told me he had been trying to give the fellows in another gang some idea of what I had been saying in the pool hall. As he had not been very successful, they wanted to know if I wouldn't come over and spend some hours with them. In consequence I spent most of the evenings of the following week with this crowd. It gathered in a corner grocery store.

On the whole they struck me as cleaner in their living and certainly in their speech than the lot that hung around the pool hall, but there was less hunger of soul among them. They were abject slaves of the Catholic Church, bigoted, superstitious, complacent, dead.

For a long time the first night I almost despaired of breaking through or getting around the endless questions and objections with which they interrupted me in behalf of their church. But at last, somehow, they stopped to listen. And then I poured out to them all my heart. A deep silence followed.

Presently one of them, with a faraway look in his eyes, said quietly, "It would be a great world if everyone thought like that and lived like that, wouldn't it!" And in my joy at this response I cried, "But you can, you can! That's the wonderful thing about it, that everyone of us can have that kind of a world within himself now! 'Heaven' is wherever God is, wherever love is. And God can and will take full possession of our hearts now, if only we let him."

But they were more impressed with the weakness of human nature: we are only men; we can't be perfect; we can't be like Jesus.

I kept coming to the store almost every night that week. And now and then it was worth while. But more and more the talk seemed to gravitate down to argument about the Catholic Church. I could not say enough, "I don't want to argue; I won't argue. Nor am I attacking your church, or any other church, or trying to ram anything whatever down your throats. If you are satisfied with your present way of life and the teaching of your church, if nothing I have said or am trying to do has quickened anything within you, I would not try to undermine your happiness or force my beliefs upon you. I am not here to conderim. Let each man follow the way of life that seems to him best."

But I felt that a hunchback expressed the general verdict of the whole crowd when he remarked that I was a "nice fellow," but I was "on the wrong track."

Meanwhile, in the pool hall also, where, for all the vulgarity and roughness, the eagerness to talk with me had been greatest, it became evident that the first eagerness was dying out. There was still a friendliness and a certain something else that they showed toward me and not toward one another, but there was no longer that desire to talk with me by the hour about the deep things of life.

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The apparent lack of any lasting effect from his speaking efforts was discouraging. Other things also led to self-doubt and to uncertainty about the correctness of his course. At the same time, however, this was an important period of spiritual development for Simpson, of increasing sensitivity to the voice of God within himself:

The prayer side of my life had been undergoing a change for years. I cannot remember how far back I ceased to pray for things. But even all regularity in prayer I had stopped while I was still a minister. Too many times I found myself merely carrying out a resolution and going through a routine. One day I sprang from my knees and exclaimed, "This isn't real. I am going to pray when I feel like it, and not put myself through the form of it when I don't."

After that there might be times when I prayed for hours; and there might be times when I did not get down on my knees for days on end. Prayer became a matter of the outreach of my whole being toward new and higher life, or of the little cries of longing, or adoration, or of joy and blessing that whispered through my mind or sometimes escaped my lips. Even while this was still my approach, I went on to something, more and more wordless. I simply undertook to be still, and in that stillness to listen. I had to learn that it is possible to be still, and more still, and utterly still; and that it was the utter stillness that I must strive to reach. It took me a long, long time to learn how it felt to be utterly still; and to know when I was utterly still.

Nevertheless, from this time on, this inner stillness began to be more and more the very center of my life. For me, it was God who spoke to me here. Less and less was he an idea or an ideal, a theological abstraction or a metaphysical absolute. He was not something to be argued about or that could be proved or needed proving. He was not something to be found in a book or in someone who lived a long while ago. He was something I knew by experience. He was that which spoke and moved within me in the deep stillness of my being

While my days were full of this and that, and my hopes and dreams rose and fell, my spiritual growth went ever on, quietly and steadily. One evening it came to me what Jesus

had meant by "narrow is the gate, and straitened the way, that leadeth unto life." Once, I had taken it to mean the straight and narrow way of the Puritan, worked out by the mind and imposed by the will, but my unfolding insight had revealed to me that it did not. The "gate" was mystical experience, extended awareness, heightened sensitiveness to reality and to value, a new faculty of perception, an inner ear attuned to new music. Only by this could a man enter that world of reality which Jesus called the Kingdom of God.

Without this added sensitiveness that world is as much closed as is a sunrise or a look of love to a man born blind. This gate is so narrow that only he can enter it who will make himself nothing. And even after he has entered he is confronted with many different choices. Many different voices call to him, many that speak for the security and advantage of his little self as well as the one (it is always only one) that would lead him toward the highest life.

And how well the voices of fear and self-seeking learn to simulate the "still, small voice" of God! It is difficult therefore, under all circumstances, to be able to be sure which of all these voices is the voice of God, and then always to follow it. A man has to learn to thread his way through a maze. But uncertainty is resolved and disappears the more he is inwardly hushed in utter self-surrender. When at last this is complete, all voices are still but one. This, really, is different from any other voice, and in time, by much hearing of it under all sorts of circumstances, he comes to know it beyond any possibility of confusion.

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Elsewhere he describes the mystical insight on which he was coming to rely -- what he sometimes called his "Inner Light" - as neither feeling nor thought, but a resolution of the two: "a synthesis of all the highest perceptive faculties in us" and "the surest, soundest, and most exalted wisdom" of which man is capable.

Simpson's spiritual growth did not ease his self-doubt, however; if anything, the "still, small voice" to which he was learning to listen with greater diligence was pressing him harder than before, raising new conflicts within him, and leaving him less decided as to his proper course.

He did not stay in Carteret, but moved to several other areas to pursue his way of poverty and service. Passaic, New Jersey, about 18 miles north of Carteret, became the focus of his activities for several years, beginning in January 1922, and he eventually took up residence in a dilapidated shack in Wallington, a poor, outlying district of Passaic.

It was there that he wrestled most mightily with the questions troubling him. Perhaps the most nagging question of all was whether or not the Franciscan way should be his way. Years later he wrote of this period:

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I cannot say that the Franciscan life I was trying to live still commands my full admiration. Far from it. There was much about Francis of Assisi that I now find repugnant and deplorable. Franciscanism was something I had to get out of me, and even more so the Christianity that made me susceptible to it. But the way to get them out of me was not, by any means, to break with them while they yet remained the best I knew.

If a man is to grow toward wholeness his life must be built up, bit by bit, out of the deposits resulting from his obedience to his own inner perception. If he rejects an idea or

a purpose or a motive, it must be, not because of outside pressure from those who are older or reputedly wiser or obviously in the majority, but solely because he himself sees through it and on his own perception recognizes that it is empty, ugly, or false. To break faith with the best one knows on the strength of another's conviction or opposition is to cut oneself off from that gathering nucleus of vitality and vision which alone can make one into an organic whole: no satellite but a freely moving and shining sun, a "self-rolling wheel," as Nietzsche put it.

Whatever remained for me the best I knew, therefore, remained for me my "golden luminous cord," [2] which alone could lead me out of my labyrinth into the light, out of the morass of my confusion onto firm ground. Sound or erroneous, whatever commends itself to a man's deepest consciousness as the best he knows is his only clue to the way he should go, and following it his only hope of ever becoming wholly alive. Indeed, it contains his surest hope of getting rid of whatever error his best perception may contain. By following it out faithfully to the end he subjects it to the test of experience, by which the chaff is sifted from the wheat; he gives it a body, as it were, by which he can see it for what it is, and if there be error recognize it as error and cast it forth.

Said Blake, "If the fool would persist in his folly he would become wise" (*italics mine*); and again, "The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom." It was necessary, therefore, that I follow my Inner Light right down to the very end of the path it gave me, explore it thoroughly, exhaust all its possibilities; and then perhaps my Inner Light itself, out of the lessons of this experience, might give me a way to go that left the old errors behind.

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He was to persist for nearly eight more years, and he was actually to plunge much more deeply into Franciscanism before seeing its folly. One facet of the society around him which proved a constant goad to him was the utter lack of Christian charity and brotherhood in most of those who called themselves Christians.

During the Christmas season of 1923, in an incident which is also related in *Which Way Western Man?*, he took off his shoes and walked barefoot through the snow

2 *Toward the Rising Sun*, William G. Simpson (Vanguard Press, 1935), p. 49.

in bitterly cold weather to downtown Passaic to speak to the people on the streets. [3]What he began telling them, until he was arrested and hauled off to jail, was this:

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"O people of Passaic, I come to you in the name of all those on earth who suffer. How can we stand it to be well fed and warm, when even in wealthiest America there are millions who hunger, when in Europe and India and the Near East ... there are millions who starve to death, millions clad in rags, millions even of women and children who walk on the winter's ice without shoes or stockings?

"What is the use of all our talking about Jesus, when he said very plainly that so long as we left one human being hungry or thirsty or cold or unfriended or in prison, even so we

left him?

"Where is the brotherly love in our hearts if we leave these people to suffer alone while we literally waste the food and money and time which might save them ... ?

"If anyone of these millions were members of our own families, under the same roof, sitting down at the same table, could true love do anything less than share with them equally, until our need was as great as theirs, and their supply as great as ours? ... But we are all members of one family, one great family, whose only mother and father is God, taking in every human being, the Black and the Red and the Yellow the same as the White; the German, the Russian, the Italian, the Pole, the Jap the same as the American; Protestant, Catholic, Mormon, all the same; Jew, Christian, Hindu, Mohammedan, atheist, Buddhist -- they, too, all the same

"If some feast while others starve, what can it mean but that some have snatched from their brothers' plates? Decently disguised and plausibly excused as it may be, can the bald fact be other than that some are strong and have stolen?

"I have profited by this stealing too long. But I can do it no longer To meet my daily needs I

[3] Which Way Western Man?, William G. Simpson (National Alliance, 1978), pp. 112-115.

will go forth with a beggar's bowl to receive the droppings from the table of the Lord. And ... the visible sign and pledge of fidelity to my Lord ... shall be this: that henceforward, so long as he desires it of me, while there is one human being in need, I will go without shoes."

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For two years, winter and summer, that is exactly what he did, even when invited to address large gatherings of Christians in rather elegant surroundings. And shoes were not all that he gave up. On Good Friday, 1925, as he was walking barefoot across the New Jersey countryside, near the little town of Pleasant Grove, he was suddenly filled with the irresistible urge to go all the way, to make no more compromises. His inner voice told him:

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"Strip yourself naked, and from this hour depend only on what comes to you as a gift." I must shed off all my old life, with its fears and desires, and all the buying and selling in self-protection that had come out of those fears and desires, right down to my last stitch, right down to my bared skin; and thereafter depend on God, on the love in men, as a child depends on its mother

But how could I do this? I saw myself approaching a farmer's back door, and the expression on the face of the farmer's wife when she opened to my knock. It seemed impossible. I struggled. And as I struggled I paced up and down, up and down, fearing, and yet wanting. How can I? How can I? But also: How can I not? How dare I refuse?

And the steady, quiet whispering in my ear, "You must. You must. You can. It is possible to do it. And you must."

Just then there reached my ear the faint ring of a distant axe against a tree. In a flash I saw my way through. That woodsman was God's answer to my shrinking from facing the farmer's wife stark naked: out of his mercy he was easing me through. It was decided.

With heart overflowing with thanksgiving and joy, I knelt down for a moment. "Nothing in my hand I bring -- naked come to Thee for dress," I whispered.

And then quickly I slipped off my shirt and trousers and lay them on my knapsack; then my underwear, and on top of all my Ingersoll watch and my fountain pen. And then at a bound I leaped the fence, sprang across the wide stubble field that lay between the road and the woods, and suddenly stood before the woodchopper. He looked at me transfixed. And I was almost as dumbfounded as he: for I knew him; and worse yet, he knew me But there was no help for it. The die was cast.

"Mr. Frace," I said, "I want to begin a new life today. All that I have, as if it were the dead skin of the life that I want to leave behind, is in a little pile by the side of the road, over yonder. You are welcome to anything there you can use. Henceforth I want everything that goes from me to go as a gift of love, and to live only on what comes to me as a gift."

He was a very simple fellow; indeed, he was known around Pleasant Grove, where he lived with an elderly mother, as pretty much of a wastrel. Yet he seemed to understand, though his voice quavered a little as he said, "You wait here, while I go over and see if I can't get the man I'm working for to give me some clothes you can put on."

So he went off, and I kept myself warm with the axe. Presently he came back with a pair of old, black dress trousers and an even older shirt with heavy, gray-and-white stripes that somehow suggested a penitentiary. I thanked him warmly, and after a little talk I went on my way, holding up my trousers with one hand, for they were much too large in the waist, and no belt had come with them. I stopped here and there as I went, and one man gave me a suit of underwear, and another a sack coat and a piece of cord for my trousers. By this time I had reached the concrete highway. I made no effort to get rides. I just trudged on and on, with my thoughts. By the time I had walked the ten miles to the village of Washington my feet were raw and cold. When I went into the railroad station to rest two plain-clothesmen sat down, one on either side of me, and put me under arrest. They thought I must be an escaped lunatic from a nearby insane asylum.

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This, episode came at about the halfway mark in his Franciscan period; he still had another four and a half years of desperately earnest striving before he could hear his inner voice directly and clearly, without the distorting effect of its being filtered through a layer of Christian attitudes and preconceptions. Even so, other, more natural attitudes were beginning to break through his Christianity much earlier. Of 1926 he writes, "Even in those days I was essentially aristocratic in my motives and taste. I sought quality in life everywhere, always. But I had much to learn about what quality in human life is, and is made of."

The same year he had an experience which moved him much closer to the new path for which he was groping. It was his reading of *The Psychology of Religious Mysticism*, by James H. Leuba, a professor at Bryn Mawr College:

This book, together with the exchange of letters with Dr. Leuba that followed my reading of it, had a far-reaching and momentous effect on me. Above all, it brought home for the first time the necessity of distinguishing clearly between the "raw stuff" of the mystic's experience and the interpretations of that experience which he has commonly included as a valid part of the experience itself. In my deepest stillness there had always been that which spoke within me and said, "Do this" or "Go there." And this that spoke within me was, indeed, part of the raw material of basic, irreducible human experience.

That much was certain. But I had not been content to leave it at that. On the contrary, I had immediately interpreted that experience. I had assumed I knew what it was that spoke. I declared that God spoke to me. In doing this I went beyond what I knew by experience, and poured experience into the mental mold of a metaphysical and theistic construct. I now saw, or was put on the way to see, that this was unwarranted. And in the end this realization was to cut from under me my belief in a theistic universe and to prepare me for Nietzsche and for what was to be a vast spiritual upheaval.

At the time I think I did not fully appreciate the gravity of what had happened to me. I failed to apprehend that before I got through I should have to lose my belief in a metaphysical God as the guarantor of moral order, rationality, and purpose in the universe, not to speak of his place as guide and stay of my own individual life. I sensed then only that my mystical experience did not, as I had supposed, provide me with adequate grounds for feeling any certainty about such ultimate matters. But even this, apparently, was enough to leave me in some distress. On April 23rd I wrote in my journal:

"Out of an hour of deepest doubt and deadness and darkness, as I walked the road this night, it was given me to say, 'I know not whether or not Thou lovest me; but whether or no, I love Thee.' And I knew that this was enough.

"I will come to the place where I do not depend on being loved by anyone, not even on being loved by God. And even though it somehow be proved that God is not Love, that the universe is malign toward man, yet will I love God, and all that is, everybody and everything. For therein is Life. And because I must."

Even this first, tentative answer perhaps indicated that I should prove not incapable of that inner self-sufficiency in which alone a man can find a rock able to withstand all the onslaughts of circumstance and all the caustic solvent of modern scientific scepticism. And my further reactions to Leuba, set down five days later, gave evidence that I should eventually prove equal to the new problems that were opening up before me. I wrote:

"Last night I finished Leuba's Psychology of Religious Mysticism. He concludes not only that God is not known directly or at all through the mystic's quiet, but that knowledge of God, like knowledge of everything else, comes only through the mind. The senses and the mystic's experience of ekstasis (of standing outside of himself, outside the limits of ordinary self-consciousness) furnish only 'mental stuff,' 'neutral stuff,' which has no meaning till it is elaborated by the mind. Knowledge requires mental interpretation of experience.

"I think it is quite likely that his contention is strictly sound. But it may be a question whether 'knowledge' itself (as thus strictly defined) may not be a thing that we shall have to transcend in the evolution of human life.

"Knowledge is always a self-conscious process, in which the knower stands off and sees things in their relations, their proportions, and their significance. But while he may thus

be able to sift and sort and arrange and give meaning to things, does not the very perspective which enables him to do this require that he (as it were) hold them in his hand, that is, stand off from them, see them apart from himself? Does not all 'knowledge' require a knower and known separate? And does not this perspective (together with the results derived from it) fall short of that further perspective in which we see things not in relation to ourselves but in relation to the whole, or not so much see things in this larger, more universal relationship, but in our own consciousness, our own feeling, realize our oneness with all that is?

"'Knowledge' does depend upon mind, and, therefore, upon that self-consciousness out of which mind was evolved and of which it is a constant expression and reminder. It is better than simple consciousness, where the knower is one with the known but where there is no differentiation, where the knower does not know that he is one with the known. But does it not fall short of that other consciousness, in which the perceiver is aware that he is one with the perceived, knows that he is the perceived? May this not be as simple and immediate a datum of the experience of such a mystic as Buddha or Jesus or Edward Carpenter, as are the ordinary data of sensory experience?

"The mind may then go to work on this experience and build out of it new conceptions of Reality. The mind or other faculties may there-from derive a sense of peace, of security, of joy. But is not this root matter, this perception of oneness in the universe and of being one with the universe or even of being the universe itself -- is not this as immediate an experience as is undifferentiated awareness in simple consciousness? Is it not itself 'mental stuff' from which peace, security, and joy may be derived but which is itself independent of all mental interpretation or elaboration?

"And if so, may we not have in the true mystical ecstasy (not the emotional orgies of some of the neurotics) the attainment (or sudden emergence) of a new faculty of perception, an inner eye? Upon the material it provides the mind may work, but it will itself provide material never provided by the senses or reason."

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This growing understanding of the meaning of his inner voice did not in the least smother it with reason or make his communion with the god within himself any less a truly religious experience. But he was inevitably evolving toward a cosmotheist understanding of this experience and away from a Christian understanding.

After an hour of mystical communion which came upon him one night in October 1926 as he was walking alone in the dark, he wrote in his journal;

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"I am not Bill Simpson. I have known it this night. I have bestrode the hilltops and reached among the stars. I don't know who I am or what I am.

"I have pressed my Beloved close, I have breathed His breath, I have kissed His face in the rocks and gentle evergreens and the dead leaves on the ground. I have drunk deep the fragrance of His body with nose pressed close against the earth and the grasses and the low-growing herbs.

"I don't know who I am - or what - but I am not Bill Simpson. Yea -- yea -- I am Thou. Bill Simpson can no longer hold me. I laughingly elude him and will not be held by all his clutchings. What happens to him, it is nothing.

"I will live in millions of others, in the wind, the light, the grasses and trees and running waters, the morning light and the evening twilight, in the sun and moon and stars. Before these were, I am -- and after these are gone, I am."

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After this his Franciscan life in Wallington became more and more intolerable to him. He could stand "doing good" and speaking in the streets for only a few days at a time; then he would have to leave and wrestle with his conscience before coming back once again. He writes;

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There were parts of my life with regard to which I was plagued by a constantly deepening uncertainty. More and more I had to doubt whether you did best help a man who has to lie in the gutter, by lying down beside him. And even if it were true, the first law of my being was not to help others, but to become what I was meant to become.

Whatever "doing good" I did must be consonant with my own true makeup; it must be something I did while I went the way that belonged to me. In the last analysis it made no difference how much inspiration people might get out of hearing me speak or learning of the life we lived in Wallington. No matter what the effect I must not put anything on or keep up anything that was false, or true for me no longer. My life was not a spectacle or a demonstration. Any inspiration from it that could prove real and lasting must come out of what I was.

From the same angle I saw it was essential to throw off the spell of Jesus. With my head, to be sure, I had begun to see even long years before that I must not follow him. I had rejected the theology that made Jesus of cardinal importance. And when Brooklyn's pompous Dr. Reisner had asked me if I were not "trying to carry on the Lord's work," I had replied, "No! I have my own to do." And in all my talks I had for years been declaring that every living thing bears within itself the way it must grow, the shape it must fulfill.

No potato rolls its eye around to see how the cabbage grows. And the way I went must come out of myself as oak leaves come out of an oak tree. If I failed in this, I failed in everything: the life force in me had been beaten.

If I made a pattern even of Jesus, if I let any word of his take the place of my own insight, then he whom so many people looked to as saviour would become my destroyer. He could inspire me, but inspire me only to find and to follow a way that was my own, as he had followed a way that was his own -- else was he my enemy.

All this I had seen and said quite rightly. But in fact, and more largely than I had realized, I was living the way I lived in Wallington because I thought that was the way Jesus had lived. The form of my life was being determined by an idea. Living impulse was being subordinated to reason. But one cannot live so -- not really live. The time was now approaching when I must throw off this idee fixe before it strangle me. It was not Jesus' life I must live, but my own.

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Breaking long-established patterns of thought and behavior is easier said than done,

however. Simpson was, as he notes, "slowly and laboriously climbing out of the quagmire that the influence of Jesus had become to me, but my legs were still pretty shaky and the ground under me anything but firm."

His legs betrayed him, and he fell back into the quagmire, when, in the spring of 1927, what he called his "martyr complex" was reactivated by a Christian friend from Georgia, who believed that his personal mission was to love Blacks and Whites equally and to persuade others to do likewise. In 1927, nearly three decades before Jewish television had begun working its magic on the minds of White Georgians, that was a dangerous mission. It was the danger which was the principal attraction for Simpson. While he was debating with himself about going to Georgia with his friend, he wrote to two other friends;

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" ... I now face squarely the utter necessity of beginning to live dangerously. Not that I would seek danger ... But in a world like ours love must cost; perfect love must cost a man's all. And my life has been easy, safe, cheap, largely talk, little doing, no doing that took all I had in me I feel, indeed, that love is as much denied in Passaic as in Georgia, but the situation is much more intangible, harder to come to grips with. I haven't come to grips with it at all. I feel none of us has. If we had, the lion would have roared long before this. Apparently all we do no more than tickles his ear. For he snores on and on, as though we were nowhere around.

"Something is wrong.

" ... May we not all of us together lay ourselves open before God, and be willing to go any way?"

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In the end, however, he decided to go to India rather than to Georgia. "Many friends, " he writes, "wanted me to meet Gandhi and were ready to put up money to make the trip possible." He sailed from San Francisco for Yokohama in late November 1927.

In Japan he had a long visit with a Japanese Christian evangelist, and then he went to Manchuria to see a Buddhist sage. In Singapore he conferred with a noted Mohammedan imam. And eventually he made his way to India.

In Calcutta he spoke with a number of Hindus, some of them disciples of Gandhi. Later he went to Bolpur to visit Rabindranath Tagore, the great Hindu poet and mystic. It was there, as he was walking and talking one evening with Kahiti Mohan Sen, a Sanskrit teacher at Tagore's school, that he experienced a sudden flood of mystical insight:

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At that moment something happened inside me. We finished our walk, and I continued to listen to what Mr. Sen was saying, but for once it was with only half an ear. All the while there went through a me, stab after stab, a sense of my faithlessness. Like the woman taken in adultery I felt caught in the very act. Had I come all the way to India to hear my own words, now as it seemed thrown up at me tauntingly, in a word of Kabir?

Did I not know even before I left America that each man's Gita, a Gospel, and God are within himself? Would I ever have crossed so much as the continent had I been true to that sense in me?

What was I doing in India anyway? Why was I hanging around asking for food that other men, like Tagore and Gandhi, had chewed over? What had fed them would not necessarily feed me. Anyway, chewed food was unclean....

As soon as I could escape I found myself a solitary place in a grove of mango trees, and there in the full moonlight I paced up and down while there came to me and pulsed and throbbed through me and overflowed from me a deep, liberating and exultant sense that "my guru is within me." It sang and sang itself through my soul, until I laughed aloud in the moonlight.

I knew a sense of inner sufficiency for anything and everything, a consciousness of the presence of my Beloved so real and so near that I could entirely abandon myself to the eternal present and live each moment as though I never had lived before. The example and precedent of others, even of Jesus, I must set aside, reverently but firmly. From my own past I must set myself free. I must forget all that I ever had said or done.

And on this Light that had come to me I must act at once. I must cancel the whole trip up the Ganges and even all the arrangements that I had made to stay with Gandhi.

Still drunk with the spirit that was upon me I went in to my room and wrote a letter to my friends back in Wallington, the essential part of which read as follows:

"My guru is within myself! I've said it and said it, but now I know it as never before -- and I cannot any longer contain him in the old ways.

'The old, hard, long-cherished shell cracks at last. Away with all this talk about coming to India to sit at the feet of Gandhi or some other. All that is in Gandhi and Tagore and Nishida and all the swamis, saddhus, and sanniyasis in the world is in me -- and for me far more is in my own heart than in all of them put together. All this going hither and yon and talking to this man or that is sawdust to me. Why should I eat all this food that other men have chewed over? It revolts me.

"I will have the living water that is wasting itself from the springs in his eternal hills. I will have the ripe, luscious fruit brought to me fresh from the fields in his own hands. I will have none other.

'The crack widens. I will have done with my past. ... A holy madness is upon me. I laugh and chuckle in my joy. Say not to me, 'Slow, go easy, wait to make sure.' I will make sure -- but I don't need to. I know I am right; never was I so sure of anything in my life.

"I am a camel and I know water when I smell it. I have got the sniff of it in my nostrils and nothing shall stop me. I say again and I will shout it and dance to it; My guru is within me.

"No more will I remember what I said yesterday. No more will I write down the gem which came to my heart today, like a miser counting his gold. Such gems -- I have millions of them. I need not to count them or guard them or save them. What comes to me today I will scatter with lavish hand, like a sower scattering seed, and tomorrow I will do the same -- and the same forever and ever.

"I will live only now -- each moment fresh and new as the morning dew. I know nothing about 'no property,' or 'no money,' and all the rest of it. I know not what will happen to Wallington or to my relations with any of my comrades. I know positively nothing about any such thing as a 'way of life.' I know only that my guru is within me, and that what he gives me to do each moment I will try each moment to do. Joy, joy, joy: the shell really cracking at last -- and the face of a little child emerging."

A few days later he returned to Calcutta and booked passage on a ship to London. After a week's visit with the artist and writer Laurence Housman, brother of the poet A. E. Housman, Simpson boarded another ship, late in March 1928, for America. He writes:

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Somewhere on the high seas, between Southampton and New York, I threw my little, worn, khaki-covered New Testament into the Atlantic. Its end papers and the margins of the pages of the Gospels I had crowded, in fine penciled script, with my comments on the teaching of Jesus. It was only a gesture, of course, and maybe a futile one. But it was an effort to stamp upon my conscious, and even upon my subconscious, that I must be done with this everlasting reference to Jesus, or, for that matter, to the teaching of any other man.

Part 4 of 7 parts

Editor's Introduction:

While he was in India in 1928 William Simpson finally realized that he must stop trying to follow someone else's footsteps, whether those of Jesus or Gandhi, in his search for the light within himself. On the voyage home, as a symbolic gesture, he threw his New Testament into the ocean.

But more than a gesture was needed to reorient his whole view of the world and give him a new basis for his striving. For more than another year he groped his way along, still largely within his old Franciscan framework. During this time, however, a profound reorientation was taking place.

By the beginning of 1929 his new ideas, which he was still expressing primarily to Christian audiences, were causing a growing rift between him and many of his former friends and supporters -- and they were making it increasingly difficult for him to avoid breaking completely with his Franciscan existence in Wallington:

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It was then also that I first got started on Nietzsche's Zarathustra. Though Scott Nearing had given me a copy seven years before, during the summer when I was building his house, it had gone unread until now

I read desultorily and slowly. And I did not take to ... [Nietzsche] readily. Probably at any earlier time I could not have taken to him at all. But by then I was ready for him. Once his thought had touched me, I could not get away from it. His words stuck in my consciousness like splinters. They worried me. I kept coming back to think about them. But all the while darkness was settling down upon me thicker and thicker. Doubt engulfed everything, and confusion spread and spread. It seemed to me my God had led me up a blind alley and left me.

Or was the truth something even more terrifying? Could it be that the still small voice I had heard within me had not been the word of God, after all? Had my very mystical

experience, which had seemed to me the realest thing in existence, upon which I had built my entire spiritual life and staked my all -- was even that only an illusion?

For the moment I did not know. I did know that I hated Wallington and all it symbolized.

I knew that I didn't have it in me to carry on my Franciscan life any longer. I was desperately tired. I could push myself no further. I must have quiet. I must let all the strain slip off. I was at an end, and chaos was before me, and I must go down into it By the fall of 1929, after nine years of St. Francis, I had had enough. I knew I was through

For one thing, I had become increasingly suspicious of the "inasmuch" doctrine [2] commonly attributed to Jesus

Again, nine years of very searching experience had slowly forced upon me the recognition that men are not equal -- not equal in their stage of development, their attainments, their capabilities, their intrinsic individual worth, or in any other way. My acceptance of the democratic dogma, like my proclamation of human equality, may have been an expression of my faith, my hope, above all of my fervent wish, but it flew in the face of reality, and it had long blinded me to the recognition and acceptance of reality. And it is one of the supreme realities of human existence that men are not equal.

But if not equal, then what were we doing in Wallington? What soil was this for our seed? If I had remembered Jesus' "inasmuch" and the report in Matthew that the gospel was "preached unto the poor," why had I not remembered also his "cast not your pearls before swine"?

Though at the time I would doubtless have been very loath to recognize it, there had been at work within me from the beginning an instinct for quality of life and a search for elevation and superiority: in short, for the aristocratic. And if so, I should have gone wherever it showed itself in eyes that saw and ears that heard. There certainly was never much concern about it in Wallington.

I had come to be stormed with doubts whether my Franciscan life, whatever it might have been in the beginning, was any longer a true expression of my own makeup. There was within me a constantly sharpening intuition that my devo-

[2] "...Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have ... [been charitable] unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have ... [been charitable] unto me." Matthew 26: 40

tion to Jesus had cast such a spell upon me that I had become but his satellite, when I was meant to become in my own way a sun -- however small a sun, still a body that gave forth light that came from within itself. I was aware of the growing demands of a new life within me that would give itself its own law, beyond the reach of reason, ideals, moral codes, or human precedent.

Also to be reckoned with, and doubtless an even more important cause of my breakdown, was the effect of rationalistic psychology, such as I had got from Leuba. It is comparatively easy for a mystic to hold a course in the face of "the world," so long as he can believe that he is under the direct care and explicit direction of the "God of the universe," whose love takes everyone into account, numbering even the hairs of his head (as Jesus put it), and whose wisdom and power ensure that all his commands will work

together for the ultimate well-being of all mankind, and even of every sparrow. The mystic himself then is but a man under orders, life becomes but obedience, and the ultimate responsibility rests upon God. But the moment an honest heed to psychology has forced him to regard his "still small voice" as but "the synthesis of all his highest perceptive faculties," "the highest light that is able to reach his consciousness at any particular time" (as I had put it [in my journal]), its absoluteness and authority tend to be diminished, the full weight of responsibility falls on himself, and it becomes difficult to feel or to act with the same sense of complete certainty that has been such a light and stay to mystics in a less scientific and skeptical age, who in a real sense could be and actually were childlike and naive.

There is an answer to all this, and in the course of time I was to find it, without any sacrifice of intellectual integrity, but through my last summer in Wallington the skepticism left my footing shaky just where I most needed to have it absolutely sure.

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Years later he was able to look back on the breakdown of his venture of faith with a sense of profound relief. He notes:

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... [I]t was perhaps by only a little that it missed becoming what the world would have called a success [I]f I had perceived sooner the error of settling myself among, and trying to identify myself principally with, the most underprivileged and oppressed, the venture might easily have become a movement. And if it had become a movement, I would have been responsible for releasing upon the world an influence that every passing day now makes me more certain would have been largely unwholesome.

For one thing, it was too full of the folly of Christian pity. It is no less than a crime against life when the superior is sacrificed to the inferior, a crime that is in no wise mitigated or its effects alleviated when the sacrifice is made by a man's own free will and choice. Yet our group there in Wallington, in training and in both actual capability and inherited potentiality were certainly the superiors of all the people among whom we lived and for whom we gave ourselves.

The kind of thing Albert Schweitzer did in the jungles of Africa was sentimental waste of life. Instead of being held up for admiration and emulation, as was done for years in the churches of America, it ought to have been cried down as a betrayal of life and a thing of shame.

Our belief in equality, likewise, was a betrayal of life -- or rather, of quality of life. For where all are believed equal, the voice of the superior man is drowned in the roar and shuffle of the mob, and taste tends to gravitate to the level of the gutter. This is happening all over America. Moreover, wherever this belief in equality spreads, there goes a disbelief in the importance of heredity, of blood. The cry always becomes the weakling's cry for a change in environment, something that the strong man ever wills to master and to dominate; and all effort to weed out the defectives by cutting off the flow of tainted blood at its source and to build up an improved stock of men and women by attention to intelligent mating is rendered almost impossible.

All are equal, is the cry. Anybody can marry anybody. Even the races are equal. Every breeder may know that you must be most particular by what bull you breed your cows,

and every informed farmer gives heed to it, but among humans -- so the perverters of mankind would have us believe, journalists, professors, and even preachers -- there is no good reason why Whites should not marry Japs or Chinese, or even Negroes

[I]t is the suicide of a people when they allow themselves to be made into a "melting pot," where you no longer have a people but only a hodgepodge of peoples, a stew of conflicting bloods, instincts, traditions, capabilities, characters, values, and tastes. It is the betrayal and surrender of those differentiations that their ancestors, by segregation, painfully achieved and maintained through a long period of time, and that give them their direction and their keys to mastery, and thus to their existence all its ultimate potential and significance.

I am glad my venture failed, if for no other reason, because I am convinced that my preaching of equality would have worked against the only kind of life I believe to be worth striving for -- that is, against quality of life.

But there is another reason why I am glad it failed, and for me personally a very important reason. If it had succeeded and become a movement, I can but wonder whether, with my absorption in it and the assurance of its soundness that its very success would have tended to give, I would ever have been able to achieve enough freedom from it to stand off and see it in perspective -- above all, to discover the errors in it and get rid of them. Might not this very triumph of my spirit have brought my spiritual growth to a standstill? Might not my success have become my grave?

When I crashed upon the rocks of actuality, I was left stunned and bleeding. for a while -- even for a long while; it was years before I began to get over it. But when I finally pulled myself together, it was to look out upon the world and life with new eyes. And I began to get my feet under me as I never had had them under me before.

And that was the time of real crisis -- the time when it was being decided whether or not I should get up and go on. Perhaps, in the end, there is no failure if a man can make a profit out of it, if he can learn by his experience and go on to do better.

Yet there was much in myself with which I had to break before I could face in a new direction. I foreknew that friends who had been so devoted to me would think me faithless and turn away if I gave up my Franciscan life, especially my friends in the Church. For to some extent I had incarnated their avowed ideals. And, to their minds, to turn away from their ideals was to prove renegade, perhaps to forsake everything high, certainly the highest known to them.

That their Christianity might be disease, and that my sloughing it off might be a precursor to convalescence and a sign of hope and of new life, that perhaps would occur to very few. Many would call me traitor.

To all such people I had to prepare myself to answer that I had never at any time committed myself to support any doctrine, idea, movement, institution, or way of life. I had dedicated myself only to my God, to do his will as it was revealed to me, to follow the Light that was in me. If the Light failed, I could not go on. If the Light changed, I must change with it.

Anything that doesn't change is dead. If any man keeps the same values and philosophy for 20 years, he either hasn't lived deeply, or he has lacked the courage to learn the lessons of his own experience. In my own case, through all the years of my life thus far I had struggled without relenting to make my outer life match my inner vision and conviction. This, I believe, had given an inner consistency to, and bound together in an

organic whole, whatever changes experience and circumstances forced upon me.

A man who would climb a mountain does not, as a rule, climb it straight up. He climbs it by zigzag switchbacks, each of which, after an upward ascent of a certain length, breaks into a sharp turn. Yet each of these, for all the repeated changes of direction, brings him nearer to the summit and his goal.

I had believed that God had spoken to me, and like Jesus, as best I had been able, I had "taken him at his word." Doing this had landed Jesus on the cross. And therewith he died. His death cut him off before he had had a chance to show what he had learned by living. Nietzsche believed he was honest and courageous enough to acknowledge that at points he had been in error, and by the lessons of his experience to modify his course and his teaching for the future.

My taking my God at his word only landed me in a dead end. I did not die. I lived -- and I was still young enough to learn. The only important question before me was whether or not I had the courage and dedication to go on being honest.

In the days of his youth every man, if he has any vision and venture in him, writes, as did Blake, his "Songs of Innocence." And in my Franciscan venture I had written mine, not in words but in life, in actions. But now experience had bitten into me, bitten into me deep. My youthful enthusiasm had broken up on the unyielding realities of human nature and of human existence. Now must I think. Now must I evaluate. Now must I learn. Now must I face a larger world, the life of man as a society and not just as a collection of individuals. I must see him against his background, know his past as well as his present.

And not least, I must be realistic. I must have the courage to face men not only for what they may become but for what they actually are now. The day might then dawn when I should be ready to write my "Songs of Experience." And, though not pitched in a key quite so high, they might in the end prove more really beautiful and more alluring than anything I had sung in the days of my youth.

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Simpson was wrestling with more than the problem of coming to a more nearly true view of man and his society during this period; he also dealt with an excruciating and enervating conflict in his personal life. He had married in October 1922, and from this marriage a son had come in February 1929. The marriage finally ended in divorce, but for much of the time it lasted he was torn between his love for his wife and son and his responsibilities to them, on the one hand, and his need to follow the dictates of his inner voice, on the other hand. It often seemed that the two were irreconcilable.

At the same time that he was attempting to resolve this personal dilemma and coming to grips with the contradictions between the Franciscan way and his own inner imperatives, he was also groping toward a more profound change: the abandonment of the whole Oriental/Semitic world view which had underlain his approach to life thus far. He was feeling the stirrings of his blood:

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... I was a son of the West, by blood if nothing else. And in the long run blood tells. And eventually, though I might bring much with me from my sojourn in the fields of Eastern thought, I would declare myself with the West, and the Vikings, and the Scotch, and the English, and that whole Teutonic stock and tradition from which they are sprung. But

first I must be melted down, and become lost, and a chaos, before I should again find myself and my true way. That process, however, was already well started.

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Gradually order began to grow from the chaos, despite his continuing personal conflict. Friedrich Nietzsche was the most important source of the new order:

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From the beginning my reactions to Nietzsche were somewhat mixed. Despite my immediate and exultant response to much of his Zarathustra, which I read first, it was a long while before I knew whether he was going to help me get onto solid ground and draw an azure sky over my head, or whether he would leave me a confirmed skeptic and agnostic. Nevertheless, I felt almost at once that here was a man I was not going to stop reading till I had read all he had written.

I must have known he was dangerous. By reputation he was the most devastating critic of Christianity. As such he could hardly fail to prove a battering-ram against the very foundations of my whole world. But the fact that I exposed myself to his attack, and invited it, must have been evidence that I was not completely down. For one's last refuge one always fights. There must have been some secret instinct that whatever his onslaughts could demolish, his sapping undermine, I should be well rid of; that somewhere deep within me there was a citadel where I was invulnerable, or at least that Nietzsche had found such within him, and that I could find the like of it if I but gave up my hold on everything that was, at bottom, subterfuge and self-deception.

If I risked my peace, the security in the face of the universe that I had found in old beliefs, it must have been in the faith that I could find a deeper and surer peace. If I risked having my life knocked to pieces, it must have been in the hope that at last I should be able to establish it on a rock beyond the reach of any attack of man or circumstance.

Yet I read Nietzsche at times with resistance. More than once I threw him down exclaiming, "If it be this I'm coming to, I've had enough." His assertion that the sexes are polar opposites and that woman's part is primarily to bear children, his rejection of the doctrine of equality among men and of all the leveling social philosophies built upon it, his recognition of the utter inscrutability of the universe and of the consequent necessity that a man walk by a certainty that he knows, and can know, only within himself -- all this, for example, was new to me and touched spots where I was tender. But by this time the new idea was lodged in my mind, and wherever I went it confronted me and waged war with the ideas and ideals and emotions I had cherished. Commonly, in the end, I had to admit he had the better of the argument. And I went on with my reading.

Fortunately, I did not dabble in him. Nietzsche is the last man with whom to trifle. As he said of himself, he is dynamite. The man who trifles with him he may well destroy. He may tarry only long enough to get Nietzsche's negative side, not long enough for Nietzsche to open to him a new earth, as he can, and for him to get rooted in it. It is my firm conviction that one should either study Nietzsche thoroughly or else stay away from him altogether. In my own case I did not rest till I had read twice his complete works, some 15 or 16 volumes, and made a very large volume of notes. This study, moreover, was spread out over nearly four years and was made in retirement. I gave myself ample time for digestion.

One thing that held me to him from the beginning was my perception that here was a man of passionate sincerity, and of a love for quality of life among men that was not more passionate than it was profound. If Jesus could say, "I am come that ye might have life, and that ye might have it more abundantly," Nietzsche could with justice say even more: "I am come that ye might have life, and that ye might have it more exaltedly." Life was no life, not worthy of the name, not worth the having, unless it had integrity, elevation, beauty, meaning.

And if he saw all this clearly as an end, he saw no less clearly the necessary means to this end, and willed these means, and to them sacrificed first of all himself. His primary concern was for life, his primary hatred was for sickness, unhealthy values that jaundiced men's vision, turned truth on its head, and handed society over to creeping death. And he had an eye like an eagle. Wherever, soaring over European life from his Alpine aerie, he detected disease, he pounced upon it. Wherever it covered itself with sham, hypocrisy, or decent disguise, he ripped it off without mercy. Why? Only that there might be more life among men and that that life might be more exalted

Of course, it was some time before I began to realize all this. Even after nearly a year of reading Nietzsche, the negative effects were more evident than the positive. Early in July 1930 I had written in my journal:

"I wonder where I am going. Nietzsche raises problems which I sometimes doubt I can even understand, and which I feel pretty sure I lack the intellect to solve. Am I not then launching forth on a sea of inevitable uncertainty? And after Nietzsche, whom else must I face before going on? And where is the end of it?

"Well -- I can't go on as I was. My old faiths and ideas are undermined by too many doubts and objections. My way now is through, not back. I don't know where I shall come out: maybe I shall have to withdraw and spend the rest of my life as a seeker and an agnostic or skeptic. I know not. But I do know that I cannot pretend that I see clearly when I don't. And I must walk through life with my eyes wide open, accepting all the doubts and difficulties which clear-eyed looking may bring to me. I will not close my eyes in order to remain a leader -- a blind leader at that -- and of the blind!"

Thus, gradually, my whole life went down into the acid. I put a question mark against everything in which I had believed. Was there any God at all, let alone a God of Love, who was the foundation of the universe? Did the universe even have any moral order? Was it going anywhere? Did it make any sense? Was it with us or against us? How could we know?

Was the mystical experience the result of a new faculty of perception, and to be trusted as the best means yet developed by which a man might sense reality and make sure of his own path, or was it all illusion and a means of pleasant but ruinous self-deception?

What was there to give foundation to the teaching of Jesus and, in particular, to the ethics of non-violence and non-resistance? Was the belief in human equality and all the social doctrines to which it had led -- democracy, socialism, and communism -- at bottom but the effort of the undifferentiated mass to smother the significant individual, leading to a frightful leveling of life, to the triumph of quantity over quality?

The unsettling effect of Nietzsche, however, never left me without a substantial body of certainty. In any case, I did an amount of speaking the following winter and spring that would scarcely have been possible had I felt hopelessly lost.

As his new world view gradually began to take shape, several insights came into sharper focus. They were not really new to him, but now he was able to express them with new understanding. One was that happiness, contrary to popular wisdom, is not a proper goal for man or his society:

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... My happiness -- what did it matter? I had something to do: for its sake I would take happiness as it came, or go without it. The important thing was to get on with my work. Often it has been out of men's agony that they have created great music and great poetry and done the deeds that slowly wove about their presence the aura of the great hero or the great saint. When ever did one of them stop to think about his happiness? Maybe their very happiness was in their suffering, if it was for some high end.

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Another insight grew from his recognition of the value of the race's exceptional individuals. He rejected the democrats' demand that everyone be "well adjusted, " and he insisted that the freedom to be different, at least for the few, is essential:

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Indeed, for its very existence society depends upon the emergence of those highly differentiated ones who become head, eyes, and taste to it: men who have broken away from the crowd and are unlike it. The creator, the genius, the prophet, the outstanding leader has to have during his formative years room enough to follow his bent. To be sure, there will be the addled ones, the stillborn ones, of whom society disposes in one way or another. But if the others are to appear, the ones who become the saints and seers, the prophets and heroes, the creative ones whom men may remember for ages, there must be granted to the individual, as one who is both part of and yet apart from society, room in which to turn around, to get the feel of himself, an awareness of his power, a sense of his destiny.

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In January 1931 Simpson moved to New Haven, so that he could begin accepting, on a more regular basis, the invitations he had been receiving to speak to Yale University students. Although his ideas had changed, his Spartan manner of existence had not; through a friend at Yale he rented a room in the Sailors' Home at two dollars a week, equipped it with a hotplate for preparing his meals, and arranged to do maintenance work around the Home at a dollar an hour to pay his living expenses. He found, however, that he had grown more discriminating in his judgment of his neighbors than he had been in his Franciscan days; the rose-colored spectacles through which he had formerly viewed mankind were gone:

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Most of the men living in the Sailors' Home I did not like. There were exceptions, but on the whole they were a lot of degenerate bums. My reaction to them was quick and sharp.

Whatever might have been the case in years past, I felt I just did not love all men. I loved him who was a promise of the new kind of man that was to be, and that in any man which made him potentially significant. I loved him who hungered, who reached out, who yearned to become more than he was. But he who was content, who had become a wastrel, him I did not love -- or if I did, it was that in him which might even yet hunger and drive him to seek and to struggle. I had definitely ceased to delude myself with the idea that all men are equal.

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Most of the Yale students to whom he spoke during the early months of 1931 were in the Divinity School, and so his talks often had Christian themes, but seen now in a new light:

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It was that winter, too, that I began to awaken to an inner and perhaps more important meaning of "resist not evil." [3] The fall before, while at Manumit, [4] which was full

[3] "Resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." Matthew 5:39

[4] The Manumit School in Pawling, NY, was a private school for boys and girls which had been started by two of Simpson's Christian-socialist friends, Bill and Helen Fincke. In 1930 it was under the direction of Nellie Seeds, wife of the socialist/communist writer Scott Nearing.

of class-conscious radicals, I had found that their everlasting digging into the ill-smelling muck of social injustice went against me. Henceforth I was going to keep out of the way of their wails and diatribes. I was coming to realize that I wanted my life to be the positive expression of the exuberance that was in my own being. I wanted to be myself a force, not a reply to some other force.

I would beware of the impulses named with the words that begin with the prefix "re": reaction, reform, resentment, revenge. I did not want to let my life activities take their departure from what I deemed to be the evils about me. I wanted to be positive. I would crowd out the weeds by sowing vigorous seed thickly It was in this vein that I had spoken at my first meeting at the Yale Divinity School shortly after my arrival in New Haven.

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During the year he continued to develop his new insights, gained primarily from his study of Nietzsche, and to fit these into the main body of his evolving intuitive knowledge:

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My faith in what spoke to me in my " stillest hour," despite Nietzsche and modern

science, still stood. Indeed, I was saying very emphatically ... that any science which would be complete, and certainly any which would be profound enough to aspire successfully to take the place of religion, would have to include and face fearlessly and honestly those realms of human experience that we have called religious.

Specifically, we needed a psychology that would reckon with the actualities and possibilities of the mystical experience. If psychology was ever to become the surrogate of religion, it would have to offer mankind, in however new terms, something that approached the profoundest wisdom of the race thus far achieved. It was not enough to account for human experience on its commonplace levels or in its perversions.

Psychology could not afford to ignore those greatest depths and heights of experience which alone could account for the lives of seers who had revolutionized men's scales of value and thus gradually shaped the history of whole races and continents.

My reference to Nietzsche, above, would imply that he attacked mysticism. And he did, repeatedly. But the force of his words was gradually very much softened by my intuitive recognition that, for all his caustic remarks about mysticism and the mystics, he was a mystic himself. ... It is unmistakable, from many passages.

The chapter in Zarathustra entitled "The stillest hour" stands out. Here, in the purest form of which I know in all of mystical literature, you have what Dr. James Leuba [5] called the "raw stuff" of mystical experience: 'Then was there spoken unto me without voice:' eight times repeated. No interpretation is imposed upon it. There is no attempt to gain authority for it by ascribing it to "God:" or to some other supernatural source, as is the case with practically all other mystics. It is the naked content of what "came" to Zarathustra (really, to Nietzsche himself), of what he inwardly "heard," his bare and actual experience -- and nothing more. But it is mystical through and through.

"What is it that speaks?" I was asking myself in regard to what I heard in my own "stillest hour." Any idea of a metaphysical God I was definitely rejecting. If I kept the word "God" at all, it must refer to something that I was sure of by experience. If I used it in connection with the Inner Voice, it must be qualified as "the God-in-you" or "the God-in-me" and be stripped, therefore, of all the omniscience, omnipotence, and other attributes of absoluteness that the word "God" ordinarily connotes. This would not necessarily make one any less mystical, but one must then be prepared to shoulder more responsibility.

From the point of view of psychology I wondered whether "that which spoke" might not be a synthesis of all my highest perceptive faculties, a synthesis of all the faculties by which I grasped the situation before me and reached a sense of the one thing I might best do in regard to it. Might it not be the

[5] James Leuba, The Psychology of Religious Mysticism.

word to my consciousness of my own life become (or singling out the means for becoming) an integrated whole?

I was not yet sure of the answer. It was a question I turned over in my mind continually, ever examining it anew in the light of fresh experience and further thought and reading. For me it was the most crucial question of all. On my answer to it hinged everything else.

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The city, with its noise and dirt and distractions, however, did not seem to him to be the best place to continue developing his thoughts, despite the advantages offered him by access to Yale University's library. He wanted to live closer to Nature, and when he received an invitation that summer to spend a few months in the Ramapo Hills, near Suffern, NY, he accepted at once. There, with a few books and his journal, he found a much more congenial environment. Nietzsche remained his principal source of inspiration:

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One day as I was climbing up the hill from Suffern ... it came over me that Nietzsche, primarily and on the whole, was magnificently positive. He assailed values long sacrosanct only when he believed them false and unworthy, and in order that they might be replaced by others more robust and healthy. His ultimate purpose always was to give men values by which their life might not only be ensured but kept ever moving higher. "He is not trying," I wrote in my journal, "to destroy the causeway that man has built across the swamps and through the jungles of human life. But he is dissatisfied with the foundations on which it has been built -- on a kind of belief in God that degrades and injures life, and on a belief in a 'beyond' that robs the here and now of its glory and necessity. He takes the causeway down, stone by stone, examining each one carefully, and then into a new causeway he builds back every value that was real upon foundations that are solid."

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Positive though his inner development was in 1931, his view of the prospects for the society around him grew increasingly troubled. In a letter to a friend late in the year he wrote:

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"I see ahead, outwardly, doom, war, the collapse of a civilization, awful suffering, night. But with my inner eye and from a high elevation I see how unspeakably beautiful Life is, in you and me and everybody, eternally awaiting our discovery of it, everything waiting upon the human discovery of it, and how everything about us, suffering and all, is as it must be now, how everything is in its place. I see that disease is not more necessary to a man who has for long years violated all the laws of life than is this decay of our civilization to our generation, nor one less useful in the service of life and health than the other. If Whitman can sing his 'Carol to Death' as it comes to the individual, we must be able to sing it as it comes to a nation, a race, a civilization. The writhing, squirming mass of worms working through the once fair flesh of a body in the grave, reducing it all to dust, is not more certainly preparing the way for new life than is the impending doom of our civilization."

What was there to do about it? From one angle there was nothing. I believed there was no force, no combination of forces, that could "save the day:" that could avert war or avoid doom. Too long we had sowed the wind. Now we should reap the whirlwind. Our house

was going down. Nothing could stop it. For the man of creative possibilities it was important not to let himself become too much concerned about it. What cannot be stopped it is waste of life to resist. One must learn to close one's eyes and to turn away. Else will the cry of the world lure the creator into the marketplace before he is ready, and the ordure of the marketplace will pollute his breath, and the tension of its strife so tighten his throat that it will give forth only a battle cry, not a song: only a reply, an answer, a solution, never an organ-toned voice, never the eternal Word. And he will become only the bearer of a lantern, never lightning, his whole self lightning, splitting the night and showing up the path for humanity, it may be, for centuries ahead.

Part 5 of 7 parts

Editor's Introduction:

The previous excerpt from William Simpson's autobiography ended late in 1931, when he was 39 years old. He had dark forebodings for the future of the Western world.

At the same time, however, he was closer than ever before to the understanding he had been seeking. His Inner Light was beginning to burn more brightly and surely, and it was illuminating both the world around him and his own path in the world more distinctly than it had earlier, during his Christian period.

But he was still climbing, still adding detail and definition to his emerging view. And he was still attempting to rid himself of extraneous influences and ideas. He writes of the summer of 1932:

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It is evident from my journal that I was getting my interior hearing aid boxed in ever smaller compass. It wasn't necessary to explore all the ramifications of a situation to make sure whether or not I had a rightful place in it. "Everything," I wrote, "that deepens the stillness within me is life for me, and everything that disturbs the stillness within me is death for me." What was alien to me and hostile to my deepest life betrayed the fact by blurring my vision and jarring the peace in my soul. This was in direct and literal agreement with the counsel I was to come upon many years later from Goethe:

"Was euch nicht angehoert
Muesset ihr meiden;
Was euch das Inn're stoert,
Duerft ihr nicht leiden." [2]

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He had, just a few months earlier, settled on a remote and isolated farm in New York's Catskill Mountains, for which a friend had made the down payment. It gave him the quiet

environment he so urgently needed to continue his exploration of his inner being. He describes his existence there in the early, wintry months of 1933:

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. . . Even the nearest neighbors were far away and out of sight . . . On every side stretched the glistening snow to the shaggy mountain-tops across the valleys. The temperature dropped to 10 above, to zero, to 10 and even 20 below. The cold drove me to give up my study and to confine all my living, except my sleeping, to the kitchen. Yet every morning, as soon as I had the stove well started, I ran out naked for a few minutes of exercises, deep breathing, and a snow bath.

c h 2 "Whatever does not belong to you You must avoid; Whatever disturbs your inner being You dare not tolerate."

Through the long evenings the wind howled around the house and sometimes sounded as though it were determined to carry away the roof. But inside, with my fire and my kerosene lamp, my books, my papers, and my thoughts, I was cozy and contented enough.

In the afternoons I commonly split wood for my stove, keeping a good supply ahead, and worked at wrecking the chicken house, the lumber in which I wanted for another building. Several of the salvaged two-by-fours I planed down and made into frames for my two bedsprings: I had two real beds at last.

Twice a week, with the same knapsack I had taken to India, I made the long trek to town for mail and milk and groceries. It took me a good two hours, for it was four miles each way -- and coming back a climb of 900 feet from the valley floor. Sometimes, when even by leaving the road I could find no windswept places and with heavy load had to drag my feet through deep snow, it was stiff going.

But it was a healthy life. People began to speak of how well I looked. I found myself singing in the early morning.

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He used this quiet time to continue his study of Nietzsche, and he gained new insights:

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It came over me that Nietzsche was really, as I put it, "a Christ without a God." What Jesus had to have a God for, Nietzsche reached without a God

And Nietzsche held this up as a goal for me. The heights I had reached in my Franciscan days I must be able to reach again, reach and pass, by a strength I found within myself. In those days God had been my all: my guide, my authority, my whole good, my companion nearer than any wife, in very truth my one Beloved.

It had meant everything to feel his presence in the grandstand above me, watching me run the race he had set before me. His love upon me had been the sun of my life, warming

and illuminating all my way. And out of my love for him I had longed to stand before him naked, and to pour out all that I had in me. Now that seemed to be gone. And yet I must not limp for lack of it or grope and flounder or fly with wing less strong or less eager. Indeed, that was not enough. My life must be more steady and reach heights yet higher.

Somehow, though my theological, metaphysical "God" was gone, I still did feel deeply at home in the universe. That I recognized. But I asked myself sharply, "What do you mean by this? What foundation for it is there? Is it any more than one of the un dispelled remnants of your erstwhile belief in God?" I was constantly mulling this over while I wrecked some more of the old chicken house or did my washing or made my long treks to town.

I had already, however, reached the conclusion that it was not merely the external that was only appearance, not only the evidence of the senses that was wholly illusion. Everything that reaches any sense of man is appearance. This holds true even of the farthest vision of the greatest mystic. He is still confronted with appearance. Jesus was. It simply is not given to man to go beyond this.

But I still talked about the real and the eternal and the ultimate, as though we had ground for believing there was any such thing, or if so, as if we could know anything about it, when as a matter of fact I recognized that no man had any faculty by which to experience it. The belief in God casts long shadows, and they linger long after God is gone.

But, as always, more interested in the vital and practical than the speculative, I asked myself whether, without a God, I could any longer follow my Inner Light so free as before from a concern for consequences. If one believes one's Inner Light has behind it all the love, power, and omniscience attributed to God, one could more readily and with more show of good sense and justice leave to God all the consequences of the course he was believed to command.

But I was unable any longer to put behind my Inner Voice any such absoluteness of authority. I had come to see it as a synthesis of all my own highest perceptive faculties. It spoke at once for my instinct, my reason, and my most recently acquired sensitiveness to meaning, to value, to fine shades of difference in quality of life. It was as though, before it spoke, all three (instinct, reason, and spiritual sensitiveness) had met in secret conclave in the depths of my subconsciousness, there to thrash out their differences to a conclusion. And when they sent to my conscious mind a messenger, to speak for them in their unity, that messenger, what I "heard," was my Inner Voice.

As such, there was nothing about it either absolute or infallible. It was definitely conditioned by one's heredity and the totality of one's past experience. It but represented one's surest, subtlest, farthest-penetrating sense of what to do in the situation by which one found oneself at any time confronted, the highest light on the situation which was capable of reaching one's consciousness at that stage in one's development. It was the voice of the undivided whole man, or the willing of that man to become undivided and whole, giving him the next forward steps in that direction.

Now, thus conceiving my Inner Voice, could I (or even more important, should I) let myself any longer trust and obey this inner imperative as simply and implicitly as before?

My answer, finally, was yes. I could not, it is true, feel an equal certainty that my obedience would make for the best good of everyone involved, as I had felt when, for

instance, I first parted with all my possessions. On the other hand, if I was correct in my understanding of what my Inner Voice was, and if I had faithfully met all the conditions for making sure that what I was listening to really was my Inner Voice, then I simply did not have any faculty or any recourse by which I might improve on its sense of direction. It represented the uttermost wisdom that was capable of penetrating to my consciousness at that time.

When, therefore, it clearly spoke to me I should obey it as if it spoke with all the authority of "Almighty God." Fallible as it might in time prove to have been, it would nevertheless surely contain less error and make for more increase of life in this world than any other course just then actually open to me. At the very least I could count upon it to make for increase of life in myself. For it was the bared tip of my life pressing into the future. Only by ever giving it its way could my life grow into all it was meant to become

Out of some kind of self-abasement, we had learned to call "human" all those things in us that were weak, blind, ugly, shameful; and to attribute to "God" everything in us that was strong, beautiful, noble, and exalted. But the truth was that it was all human, all man, all ourselves. It was utterly impossible to know anything outside ourselves. What we had called "God," therefore, were really our own highest powers and what they revealed to us, our own life on its highest levels and most significant reaches.

What we had called "ourselves" were the forces in us that hindered and fettered our highest life and the realization of our highest possibilities. It was they, and they only, that must humble themselves and surrender to the God in us. The God in us (that is, we, identifying ourselves with our own highest life and not solely with our weaknesses) must not humble himself.

Renunciation had been grossly misunderstood. Renunciation should be only of our lesser, shallower, fragmentary desires to our deepest, highest, most integral desire -- to that one desire in us which was the very core of our being, of all we had it in us to be and to do, and apart from the satisfaction of which life was not worth living. All other desires must renounce and surrender to this one, to this center of our being. But this center, this holy desire, must never renounce. To do so were to surrender life itself, to show signs, therefore, of degeneracy and decay.

This meant that the man who renounced had no claim for moral credit. He had not, as has commonly been supposed, done something "unselfish." He had merely submitted to one of the processes necessary to integration. He had merely surrendered something he wanted less for something he wanted more. Though it cost him life itself, there was nothing to whine about. He had got what he wanted most.

Also, since there was no metaphysical God-judge sitting on the throne of the universe, there was no sin. There might be error, weakness, blindness, even self-betrayal, in that one went against one's own deepest insight, but there was no more that crushing burden a power-loving priesthood had loaded onto the shoulders of humanity.

Any God that was "infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth" -- as the Presbyterian Catechism has it -- was nothing more than a bit of human metaphysical speculation. Men had made him up. They had made him up because they needed him; they required belief in him in order to live.

They were too weak to stand up alone in the face of a universe so utterly inscrutable, so seemingly non-rational, non-moral, and unhuman.

Their belief in God was a bit of burlap they had hastily woven out of their fears and wishes to stop up a hole in one of their windows, through which, else, the wintry and heartless blasts of the universe would have brought them death. They could not live without such a belief: therefore -- it was true!

But whence, oh whence, this "therefore"? What dishonesty and cowardice and mental uncleanness was hid behind this "therefore"!

It seemed to me that all these believers in God were the real atheists, and I and others of my kind, the real believers. How little it mattered what the names we called things! What every one of us actually lived by was the reality behind them.

For those who so lightly professed themselves theists, God was little more than a figment of their minds. They talked of something they did not know, and could not know in the detail and intimacy with which they talked about it, for all such lay outside the realm of human experience. The very way they talked about God revealed that he was not something they had ever heard, or seen, or touched, or been touched by. The truth was that they had no God, nothing real, only an idea about God, a mental abstraction.

But for myself, resolved to accept for the foundation of my life nothing that I did not have assurance of in experience, I found God only in what spoke in the deep stillness of my being. And that this God of mine was not any such metaphysical monstrosity as figured in our systems of theology, and did not bear all the attributes of absoluteness assigned to such a God, I meant to indicate by referring to this Inner Voice (if I called it "God" at all) as the "God-in-you" or the "God-in-me."

Indeed, I was coming to perceive in mystical sensitiveness one of the last and subtlest achievements of life in its will to power.

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So he had achieved a new understanding of himself, his consciousness, and his purpose -- more generally, of man as a bearer of divine consciousness and of man's mission as an agent of the Life Force in its upward struggle.

This new understanding left him with a greatly diminished tolerance for the doctrines of the Christian Church. Thinking of a young woman of exceptional intelligence and great spiritual vigor he knew who had decided to become a nun and withdraw into a Catholic religious order, he wrote in anguish, on the first day of 1934:

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"This Jesus you love, I hate. For it is a false, lying, stupefying, destroying Jesus.

"And the Church, which has done this to you -- this also I hate.

"Your mind seems to have died -- or, rather, your will to intellectual fearlessness and cleanliness has been drugged and paralyzed.

"I see you bowed down before a castrated idol, requiring castration of its devotees, mental castration. And the sight of it affects me like the smell of smoking human flesh arising from before Moloch

"Yes, I hate this false, lying, fictitious Jesus; this Jesus of the Gospel of John; this Jesus who never lived, never said the things you think he said; this creation of John's mind and imagination; this Jesus which has led men off the path; which has led them away from the true Jesus and made them his enemies; which more than anything else has destroyed the influence of the real Jesus and twisted it into the opposite of all he lived and died for;

which turned this veritable lion of a lover into something only warm, soft, comforting, peace-bringing, into a womanly Jesus, a Jesus for weak people, sick people, broken people; which has actually become perhaps the chief force in our civilization making for the taming of men, the belittling of men, the stupefying of men; this Jesus, which has turned the real Jesus into Christianity -- this Jesus I hate.

"And I hate the Church, which has set this trap for struggling feet, for the feet of the fairest and noblest.

"I hate this Jesus and this Church, because I see that they are enemies of Life - of that Life of unspeakable beauty, that grand, sublime, terrible Life, which through all the ages has been struggling to make men more godlike; enemies of that highest Life in myself which I began to know and to set free only as I began to see through this Jesus and this Church and to set them aside as snares, as poison, as prison houses; enemies of that holiest Life which I behold in you, before which, whenever I gaze upon it, my whole being seems fairly to stand still in an ecstasy of adoration, and which now seems caught in the black toils of this reptile.

"Once you protested against my saying anything to disturb you. But I have not spared myself. Why should I spare you? For you, as for myself, I love truth more than peace -- more than peace of mind, the peace of lying down in the face of the storm and going to sleep in the snow "

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The clearer Simpson's view had become of the path ahead of him, the more clouded had become his relations with those he had known on the path already traversed. They had remained where he had met them, while he had moved on, and communication and understanding between the two had become increasingly difficult.

He continued to speak to groups of college students -- even to specifically Christian groups -- during the mid-1930s, largely as a result of invitations received from friends acquired during his Christian days, but the gap was growing.

He caught an intimation of this in 1934, when he was invited by Professor Ralph Harlow, chairman of the Department of Religion at Smith College, to a luncheon with a number of Smith girls, as a preliminary to setting up some speaking engagements at the college. He talked about his Nietzschean view of the world and man's place in it during the luncheon:

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... I ended very intensely with, "If there be no love in the universe, we will put it there. If there be no gods in the universe, we will ourselves become gods."

There was dead silence. Then Ralph exclaimed, with an air of final judgment, "Sublime - but tragic!" Apparently he did not know that the greatest life has been tragic. Maybe existence itself is tragic. And maybe it is precisely this that religious belief has been devised to hide from the eyes of people too weak to face it. But to say that life is tragic is at the farthest remove from denying that life is good. It represents, rather, the fullest acceptance and endorsement of life, and the triumph over enigma, ugliness, and suffering.

But it was too much for Ralph Harlow. And that was the end of all thought of my ever being allowed to speak at Smith College.

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There were other intimations. When he had spoken the summer before in New York to a Summer Service Group of select students from all over the country sponsored by the Y.M.C.A., there had not been the empathy which he had been able to establish during talks to similar groups in earlier years.

And a series of talks he gave to the girls at Bennington College in 1935 apparently sounded a discordant note in the ears of many of his listeners. The professor who had invited, him, his former classmate Laurens Seelye (later to become president of St. Lawrence University), wrote to a mutual friend afterward that he had "nearly shocked Bennington College ... into nervous collapse by bringing Bill Simpson there."

Early the following year, however, he went on an extended speaking trip which took him as far south as Alabama and as far west as Chicago, and he received enthusiastic responses from at least some of his audiences:

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Most of my meetings were at colleges. I never had spoken to Southern audiences before. I had hoped that some lingering vestiges of the aristocratic tradition that had prevailed in the South before the Civil War might make them more sympathetic with my deepening conviction that men are unequal. and that rights and duties and functions should vary with the individuals concerned. But I think the only difference I noted was that, on the whole, the minds of students (at least of those I encountered) were less open and less ready to reach out to the new.

It was also my first taste of audiences all Negro. Both at Fisk University, in Nashville, and at a state school for manual training in northern Alabama I found them exceedingly responsive. But I was doubtful whether the response came out of real spiritual comprehension or was the near-slave's reaction to the enticing sniff of liberty.

In any case, I found that talking to them embarrassed me. It suddenly flashed upon me that for them to do what I counseled might be to court lynching. It was a question whether in the South any Negro could be an inwardly free and outwardly upstanding, wholly independent man, and be allowed to live. It even became a question in my mind whether, in the midst of a White man's society, I wished to see them really upstanding and independent.

For I saw, as I did not see when I passed through the South nearly 20 years before, that this would almost certainly result in accelerated miscegenation, an increased intermarriage between members of the White and colored races. And this, for my own people, I was more and more inclined to believe, would mean dire and irretrievable ruin

The intensity of the response of my audiences increased as I returned north. One of the most satisfying speaking experiences I ever had was at Elmhurst, a small college just west of Chicago. Here, in the space of about three days, I had nine meetings. After the first, which was before the whole student body, and at which I presented my fundamental approach to life, I had the chance to present particular aspects of the problem, one after another. The place was fairly turned upside down.

Yet when I went on my way I felt I left behind me more real understanding and much less misunderstanding than were usual. After this experience I wondered whether I ought not

to decline to speak at any place where I could not have at least two or three meetings on successive days.

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But the next year, in 1937, it became manifest that the gap had grown too wide to be bridged. At the beginning of that year two of his closest friends sent out a letter to about 200 others, appealing for funds so that Simpson could continue his search for truth and his efforts to share his new understanding with others. The dearth of positive replies to the letter, and many negative replies, disappointed and hurt him, but they helped him to realize just how lonely and hard his new path would be:

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My ultimate conclusion about it all was that friends who could not continue to believe in me through such decisions and changes of direction were simply not my friends. Such a course as I had followed was only what real understanding would expect of any man who was vitally alive and who, moreover, was resolved to put the claims of life absolutely first, regardless of cost or consequence.

The criticism of one of my friends, however, was constructive. Sterling Lamprecht, head of the Department of Philosophy at Amherst College, where he had heard me address the Amherst students some months before and answer their questions after the meeting, wrote me to express his conviction that for my own sake as much as for the good of some college I ought to have more sustained contact with a body of students. He would like to see me teach.

Well, I did not have much hope that any college would be willing to give me a place on its faculty, but I began to turn the idea over in my mind. I myself had found my brief contacts with student bodies unsatisfactory. My approach to life was so fundamentally different from that of most people that it was folly to hope for much real understanding from one meeting lasting but a few hours, or even from two or three such meetings I knew, too, that regularity of income would be a help, and that if I could effect some half-time arrangement it would not seriously interfere with my writing or my outside speaking

So early in May I drafted a letter in which I offered to teach any of several courses, chief among them the following: The High Trail, a largely biographical study of some of the great minds and souls of the race; Finding Oneself in the Modern World; The Mystical Experience, in which every great religion has had its origin; Culture and the Machine, a study of the effect of the machine on quality in human life and an effort to grapple with the enormous problems it has raised; and Aristocracy versus Democracy, the history and the philosophy behind these two principles, their emergence and conflict in the present world situation, and the issues at stake.

Copies of this letter I sent to four or five of my friends. Jack Darr at Scripps College in California was enthusiastic, but had only a counter proposal to offer: that I approach Pendle Hill, the Quaker school near Philadelphia, and Paul Jones at Antioch College. But I had spoken at Pendle Hill a year or two before, and rarely had I met with a response so dead

Paul Jones saw no place for me at Antioch, but he did invite me to be one of their panel of speakers, along with Dr. Jesse Holmes (professor emeritus of philosophy at

Swarthmore) and Mr. Charles Taft (a brother of Robert Taft), at their annual Life's Meaning Conference the following February, which led to a valuable experience. Chidsey at Lafayette College replied that few modern colleges could afford such a "luxury" as I should be, and that, anyway, he did not know of any faculty that would run the risk of the disturbance my presence on its campus would be liable to cause. So my letters led to little. Perhaps I could have got a toehold if I had applied to some small college in the South or had made it a point to present myself in person. But this did not then occur to me. The letters helped principally to clinch my conviction, already more than half formed, that no conventional job requiring the approval of "the good and the wise" would be open to me. I had left the beaten track and sowed my wild oats, and though those wild oats might have been largely spiritual and intellectual, society would never forget or forgive: I would have to pay for it. A letter from Sterling Lamprecht that year made this evident.

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Meanwhile, Simpson had begun 1937 with a determination to make himself as well informed as he possibly could about the new concerns -- especially that for human quality -- which had become foremost in his consciousness:

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After Christmas [1936] ... I went to New Haven for some months of concentrated study in the Yale University library. This was to prove of the greatest consequence for all the rest of my life. Again, as before, I had a little room in the Sailors' Home. At the library I was given a corner to myself, and there I spent full days, every day, week after week. My Christian inheritance and the socialistic values and sympathies that were so conspicuous throughout my Franciscan venture had left me with a bias against the physical and an inclination to favor everything based on the assumption that all men are equal. Nevertheless, even though for a long time my reactions had been kept largely beneath the surface of my consciousness, there had been going on for years a slow accumulation of observations, widening factual knowledge, and troubled reflections, which had at last brought me to the point where I knew that I must probe deep into biological realities and face squarely what I found there. I had no one to introduce me to what the problems were. For the most part I discovered them by my own explorations. One thing led to another. But probably from the start, whether or not I then realized it, the basic question was whether men are, in fact, equal or are not. This cuts right through all questions to the very quick of human existence. At the outset, too, I felt an understandable diffidence about my competence to reach reliable or significant conclusions in regard to problems in fields that I had received no specialized preparation for investigating. However, I believed I had fair general intelligence; and, layman or no layman, I was convinced I had to find out what kind of stuff our human world is really made of. I could not even chart the further course of my own life till I had reached some solid conclusions about this. And both morally and logically this came first and must be settled before I could have anything to say about it to other people. Indeed, I think I must even then have had something of that sure instinct, which has since grown into conscious and very strong conviction, that no man has a right to take any stand on issues of such vast social

consequence as those I was setting myself to explore, without first relentlessly and thoroughly testing his foundations in the same way I purposed to test mine

It is not too much to say that the work I did then, together with the continuing study I then projected and have since not only carried out but extended, has provided me with the solid foundation of factual knowledge and scientific method on which I have rested all my thinking in subsequent years, especially in regard to all problems having to do more or less with anthropology.

The problems on my mind at the time were, in particular, the physical and mental state of the American population; the differential birth-rate, by which our stocks of proven capacity are being outbred and supplanted by riff-raff; the genetic mechanism by which children inherit the components for certain distinguishing traits and levels or grades of capability, through their parents, from their ancestors; the comparative potency of heredity and environment as determining factors in the development of the individual; the possibilities of eugenics as a practical means of saving the Western world from what Professor E.A. Hooton called "biological sin"; and finally the question, even then touchy and now become so fearfully explosive, of race: Is it all an "illusion," a mere "paint job," as Professor Ashley Montagu termed it?

Or is it something real? And if so, how much does the reality finally matter? How about the racial differences in character and capacity as shown up in historical records of achievement and in test performances? And how about the wisdom of a "melting pot" policy as regards population, or of the marriage of men and women of races which, at least by all outward indications, are far apart?

Throughout my entire undertaking I was animated by a desire to strip all these questions of taboo and prejudice and to examine them in the light of the best-established facts I could find.

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Even as he found answers to his questions during his studies at Yale in 1937, he continued to be troubled by the same forebodings which he had felt in 1931. If anything, his vision of the future had grown darker, and as he studied he became more convinced than before that mankind was approaching a crisis more dangerous and momentous than any it had yet faced.

In November 1936 he had gone on a speaking trip to Portland, Maine, where he had expressed his concerns for the future of the race:

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I gave for the first time a talk I called "Aristocratic Radicalism," in which I both attempted a critique of our society from the point of view of quality of life and ventured to lay down certain principles upon which alone I believed a culturally significant and enduring society could be built. There were certain reformatory measures which, in my imagination, I could conceive as adequate to avert the catastrophe that hung over us; but I admitted that for me to present these remedies at such length was really inconsistent. Talk of them was academic. For, search the field before me and scan the horizon as I might, I could discover no sign at all that anything would be done about a single one of them. The whole current of our day, in which we were caught, was sweeping us steadily toward disaster. We were like a canoe already feeling the suck of the waters at the very

edge of the falls, and we talked about what we might yet do to get safely to shore. It was too late. The situation was totally out of hand. There was no force, and no combination of forces, that could "save the situation." Our society as a whole must go into the abyss.

Like others before me I also was reduced to what might conceivably be done with a remnant. My whole concern was with the few and the future. Today and tomorrow were already lost. But the few, who had the requisite vision and stamina, alone where necessary but preferably with others of like mind and spirit, must struggle to keep burning through the night and the storm that were ahead the light of the richest cultural heritage of our past, that when at last the new dawn came and men began to build again, they might have to guide them the wisdom that ages of human experience had proved soundest and most significant.

Part 6 of 7 parts

Editor's Introduction:

By the mid-1930s William Simpson saw the Western world so firmly in the grip of malevolent and destructive forces that he had resigned himself to its imminent and inevitable dissolution. It was descending headlong into chaos; its society, its culture, its political institutions, and its people were doomed. No force capable of averting the long-developing catastrophe was at hand.

He saw not only the suicidal war which was looming on the horizon, and the West's internal enemies who were feverishly preparing that war, but also the deep, inner sickness of the West which made it possible for those enemies to do their deadly work. And he realized that his task was not to howl into the hurricane, but instead to look to the future -- perhaps a very distant future -- when the surviving men of the West might begin to build anew; and to do what he could to assure that certain values and principles innate in the best of the race -- a certain immanent wisdom which had guided their ancestors during the healthiest periods of their past -- would guide their building again in the future.

From his study of Nietzsche he had recognized many of the values and principles which would be essential if the new building were to be sound. Also during the 1930s he had sharpened his appreciation of the race's roots, of its ties to the land

[1] This is the sixth selection of excerpts from the unpublished autobiography of National Alliance member William Simpson to appear in NATIONAL VANGUARD. The earlier selections were in the issues of March, June, and August 1983; and January and March 1984. Mr. Simpson celebrated his 92nd birthday on the 23rd of last month, at the farm in

New York which has been his home for the past 52 years.

from which it had sprung and of the traditional life modes which had evolved during long ages when it was left to its own devices.

His second voyage to England, in early 1934, was a period of especial revelation to him in this regard. He had made the trip to visit a young woman in whom he had developed a strong interest -- the same one to whom he had recently written in an effort to persuade her not to become a nun -- and the two of them stayed in a cottage in the village of Bibury, in the Cotswolds:

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Bibury was a beautiful village, nestled in the rolling Coswold hills, with its trim one street winding along the banks of the Coln. Right across from our cottage was Arlington Row, a string of conjoined dwellings so famed for its architectural beauty that pictures of it are in the museums. In fact, I was entranced with many another of the houses in Bibury. They were in one style, and were all built of stone dug out of the surrounding hills. Even the roofs were made of a local shale, shaped into shingles. A beautiful and somehow lightening effect was obtained by laying the shingles in courses quite wide at the bottom and narrowing at the top to a few inches.

Instinctively I liked having people build with what was at hand, with materials that came out of the region in which they lived. Immediately their architecture takes on a unity that tends to be lost the moment they begin importing materials from all over creation. In any case, it gives one the sense that they accept the earth, belong to it, and are rooted in it. One feels in the midst of a people stable and contented.

I got the same impression when I met an old man who was then living in the very house in which his ancestors had lived for 400 years. He was just an ordinary workingman, but there he was: plowing the same fields, walking the same paths, fishing by the same stream, smoking his quiet pipe in the evening by the same fireplace that had known his forebears since the days of King Henry VIII. The walls within which he ate, slept, talked, and begat his children were steeped with the voices and scenes from the lives of 20 generations of the people who had put their blood into him. And these things tell.

I knew it for the first time a little later when, after 20 years, I returned to the birthplace of my mother, the old family homestead, and the scenes of her youth. The place seemed surrounded with an invisible cloud of witnesses. In their presence I felt charged with a new responsibility to make my life worthy of those who had gone before me.

In this setting I realized how naturally one's family feeling would grow and one's sense of family honor deepen, how one would begin to feel one's life stretching out into and becoming identified with a long family past. And I could see how this solidarity, this sense of belonging somewhere on earth, of being rooted there and in the past of one's kin, would make enormously for the strength and stability of a people. It was with new understanding, sympathy, and appreciation that I thought of ancestor worship. Perhaps it was not quite the benighted custom I had long deemed it.

Doubtless a feeling for family and rootage in the earth did make for conservatism and for a slower pace; but even for conservatism, yes, and for a philosophy of conservatism, experience had been slowly preparing me. By my very instincts I had long mistrusted

America's passion for being always "on the go" and for going ever faster. What inner restlessness does it not betray that no matter where people are, they so generally wish they were somewhere else?

There may be times when it is indeed good to go, but on the whole would it not be better to stay put? And is it really such a good thing that we can cross the continent or land in London within five hours? And just why should we think it will be better yet when we can do it in two?

And why again have most people nowadays come to assume that of course that is best which is newest, rather than that which is oldest, and because oldest, most thoroughly tried and proven? What is finally revealed by all our feverish pursuit of speed and novelty, except that we are a people who know no peace, security, or contentment?

Doubtless there is a great deal of pride and complacency among us (and even some reason for it) over that rationalization of existence by which we are able to travel ever faster, pile up things in ever greater variety and profusion, and now, as though we wished to escape from earth altogether, aspire even to plant a colony on the moon. But one thing is sure: we have become a race of nomads. We are a people on wheels. The average American address, I believe I have read, hardly holds for a twelvemonth.

We are become renters and debtors under bond, rather than owners. Ever fewer people know what it is to own even a home -- not a trailer or an apartment, but a home, separate, debt free, and fixed in the earth. Which is to say, we are become a people without roots. And without roots -- without roots in the earth, long roots -- a people can no more exist than a tree. For the earth is our mother, and forever the source of all our life. England was growing upon me more and more -- I mean, the England of the countryside. I loved this England of ancient village churches, many of them so beautiful, and in any case overgrown with countless memories; of carved market-crosses; of cottages that seemed to have fairly unfolded out of the earth; of people who so obviously loved their land and who, through centuries, had both shaped their lives to it and shaped it and their homes to themselves. Everything seemed to fit.

It was not that there was lack of diversity: the speech of our host's Gloucestershire cook, though she lived only 20 miles from Oxford, was so strange to me that half the time I had to be told what she had said. There was far more diversity than with us in America. And yet underneath all this variation (evidence, to my mind, of vitality, independence, and individuality) and binding all into a whole, there was unity. For all had been shaped, over centuries, by the moulding thumb of tradition.

To my surprise I found I liked tradition. I liked the feeling of a long past. It was in everything, from the towering cathedrals to the worn lintels on a workman's cottage and the names of the places. I liked seeing people do things because of custom more than under compulsion of the law. Multiplication of laws among any people, an effort to hold them together by a band of iron, is evidence that their cohesiveness, the bond that holds them together by their common faith, habit, values, and purpose, is in a state of decay.

I was suddenly aware that as compared with England we in the United States were shallow. We had no depth, for we had no past. We had only surface. I began to feel that England, or that group of islands to which England belongs, was the rock whence I was hewn. I loved it. I belonged there. If I were ever to return there to live, I should only be going home.

A third trip three and a half years later, in the late summer of 1937, in which he toured Scandinavia as well as England, strengthened his feelings:

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The trip was to mean a great deal to me, and yet it would have meant vastly more if only I could have made proper preparation for it. I had read a couple of books about Sweden, but they were mostly about the modern Sweden, the Sweden of the successful cooperatives. And while this was interesting and impressive, in a way, it was not the story that would have meant most to a man like me. First of all I ought to have got the historical setting of the Norse people as a whole. I should have read Thomas Carlyle's chapter on the "Early Kings of Norway" and Snorri Sturlason's *Heimskringla* ... [as well as several more recent histories of the Vikings]. This would have given me some conception of how large a part Viking blood, injected into the veins of Iceland, Scotland, Ireland, England, France, Germany, Russia, and indeed of almost every country of Europe, even of southern Italy and Sicily, has had to do with the development of Western civilization.

I should also have read one or another of the excellent monographs on the history of Norse literature. And at a very minimum I should have read *The Voelsunga Saga* and some half-dozen of the shorter sagas, preferably in those admirably vigorous translations done into archaic English by William Morris and Eiríkr Magnússon. This as nothing else would have given me an idea of what manner of man the old Viking was, and some sense of the driving impulses that must have had much to do both with shaping my own past and determining the character of the civilization created by the peoples of northwestern Europe.

As it was, I did not even know what a saga was. And I did not really find out till one day a year or so later when, while in the stacks of the library of Wesleyan University, I came face to face with a whole section of books on things Norse, and I went home with as many of these books as I could take out. Then I began to find out. And then, too, I began for the first time to feel ashamed that while we bring up our children to know the fabled lore of the Greeks, the Romans, and even the Hindus, Egyptians, and Jews, we pass by almost entirely the great stories that circulated at the firesides of the people from whom we ourselves are most directly sprung. I vowed that, late as it might be, I would do the best I could to make up the lack in myself. And if ever I had more children, I would be prepared to see that they got what I had missed

Stockholm, the "Venice of the North," was one of the most beautiful cities I had ever seen Oh, that I had known more of the history of the place! Yet even as it was I got a good deal out of prowling alone and at all hours through the older parts of the city. One sunshiny morning I was walking briskly along the main street of Stockholm, not thinking of anything in particular, but feeling my own health and happiness and looking with pleasure into the faces of the people I passed. And suddenly it came over me, "Never have I seen so many beautiful women before!" Predominantly blue-eyed and fair-haired, they were erect, full-bosomed, with shapely legs and elastic step, and with light in their eyes and the bloom of health in their cheeks and on their naturally red lips. Nowhere was there any rouge, that abomination of nastiness by which degenerate women have sought to hide their sickliness and which healthy women are so often too weak to refuse. I exulted in this spectacle of health and beauty before me.

I have wondered since whether it was due to the fact that the Swedish people, though their blood is not entirely unmixed with that of outsiders, is probably less mixed than that of any other people in modern Europe. Certainly this mixing of bloods (or more exactly, of genes) tends to produce people of bodily asymmetry, people whose parts, inherited from widely different ancestors, do not belong together

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In addition to his exploration of Stockholm he traveled some 3,000 miles in Scandinavia, visiting Goeteborg, Uppsala, Trondheim, Lilliehammer, and Bergen, and forming a deep impression of the land and the people -- of fjords, mountains, dwellings, faces, speech, and manners. Then he went to Scotland, where he first visited an old friend from America, Aleck Ross, in the fishing village of Rosehearty, on the north coast:

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Aleck and I spent most of our time in long walks along the cliffs overlooking the sea, but in the evenings sometimes played at bowls on the green outside the village. One day we overtook an 80-year-old man, out for a walk. He was a retired shoemaker, but he talked with me of Thoreau and Emerson, he had had letters published in the London Times, and he not only expressed himself in English that was grammatically perfect, and also crisp, vigorous, and incisive, but he had ideas: his conversation was worth listening to. And in another village nearby, I met an elderly woman who in her way was even more remarkable, one of the most beautiful personalities I had ever met anywhere. And I said to myself, "In what village at home could I find such people as these? And what is it makes this difference between America and Britain? In the United States the villages -- at least the villages I have known -- are dying. All the blood is being drained out of them. But here it is not so." ...

On the way south I visited the cathedrals of York, Durham, Lincoln, and Ely -- four of the greatest in England. It was the climax in my experience of medieval architecture. Sometimes I would sit for half an hour in one spot completely absorbed in the beauty and wonder about me. I can't criticize it or even describe it, but it filled me with an ecstasy of joy and awe.

What a world it must have been when the people of a single town, not one of them counting more than 20,000 souls, not even London, could band together and in a venture sustained through centuries and out of their own souls and brains, out of their own labor and the rock and timber about them, create a thing like this! It was their corporate "gift to God." And gift to God was each single corbel and gargoyle, each face or bit of tracery carved on the chancel choirstalls, yes, each lock and hinge on the cloister gate. Such love, such devotion, such meaning was packed into every square foot of those towering spaces!

Involuntarily my own love flowed forth in return. I exulted in the thought of men's doing their work in such love. And I knew it would never be enough to make the hours men spend at our machines shorter and fewer. We should never have a world in which men were happy until again the work of their hands had meaning, and they could do it with personal satisfaction and with love "

My appreciation of the Middle Ages was deepening. At the very first, owing to my historical ignorance, I had hardly distinguished them from the Dark Ages. I had felt a

certain shock of incredulity when I first came upon the suggestion that the Middle Ages might, at least in many respects, have been ahead of our own time. But now I was beginning to wonder whether perhaps I should not have been happier to live in that age than in any other of which I knew.

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Unfortunately, there was more than the life of the Middle Ages for him to think about in the Europe of 1937. Everywhere he went there was an ominous foreboding of the calamity to come. The war propagandists were at work in Sweden as in England, and throughout his trip his awakening feelings for the past were disturbed by his growing fears for the future:

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I returned to England [from Scandinavia] with a keen sense of my own Nordic background, and with an awareness such as I never had had before, that the great Germanic, Norse, British, and early American peoples were one in their origins and belonged together. It seemed the overwhelming tragedy of the modern age that Britain and Germany had had to lock horns in the life-and-death struggle of 1914, and that forces apparently beyond their control were forcing them daily nearer to another convulsion, which might well be the destruction of them both, and of all Europe with them. There were prominent leaders on both sides who had vowed that these two great peoples must never again allow themselves to be ranged on opposite sides in a war. Who was it, what was it, that had kept them from reaching some reconciliation of their differences -- that seemed, indeed, to be preparing them to leap again at each other's throat? I did not know. I had never been interested in politics, and for years had made little effort to keep up with current affairs beyond noting the general drift of events. I had been absorbed in what I had believed to be more real and in the long run more significant. But increasingly I was finding myself engulfed, along with all other men of the Western world, in the surge of a veritable tide that seemed to be sweeping us to destruction. Wherever I went the look on men's faces as they scanned the papers betrayed the anxiety with which they beheld the daily worsening situation. Another war would finish what was left of European civilization. But there was no agreement as to what was basically wrong. Most everyone was damning Hitler as a boorish upstart or a rabid megalomaniac, but there were historical savants who declared that but for the Treaty of Versailles there could not have been any Hitler, that some of its provisions were so monstrously unjust as to have made another war inevitable, even that these provisions were dictated by people who actually wanted to make another war inevitable, for unavowed aims of their own. Socialists and Communists, of course, cursed the vicious antagonisms generated by national capitalism's competition for markets. Pacifists preached that they who take the sword shall perish by the sword, and urged brotherly love, forgiveness, and an effort to lift the conflict from the plane of physical force to that of the spirit. ... But everywhere it was but words. And from week to week the clouds loomed on the horizon bigger and blacker. The most powerful men, as well as the wisest, seemed to know as little how to dissipate the gathering holocaust as to turn aside a tornado.

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The trip which had raised so many questions also provided clues to their answers. He met an extraordinary man while in England who helped him begin to understand who was behind the rush to war, and why. Before proceeding further with Simpson's experiences in England in September 1937, however, we should let him tell us of an episode in his life nearly five years earlier -- an episode involving persons and places not previously mentioned in this series of excerpts from his autobiography:

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Shortly before Christmas 1932 John Rothschild wrote to ask whether I would do some carpentry and cabinet work on the house he August 1984 and his wife were leasing in Brooklyn. I could live with them in their home in Manhattan while I did the job [2] It was at this time I began really to know John. In the early days of my Franciscan venture he had passed through a period of turmoil when he too had been very strongly minded to "go and sell all." But in the end he went another way. Perhaps it was his love of beautiful things that deterred him.

Nevertheless, one could easily see evidence of the streak that might have made him Franciscan. He was always lavish. If he indulged himself, he also gave with free hand to his friends and those he loved. And he bore with him an appearance of inner quietness and self-possession that I never knew to be disturbed. At this time he was the head of The Open Road, which he had founded some years before. This was a student travel organization, which rather specialized in trips to Soviet Russia.

John and I later came to be close friends. He began to spend some weeks with me regularly each summer, as a paying guest, and in time brought a number of his friends to the farm on the same basis....

One evening [in December 1932] while I was doing his job he had a small select group of fellow Jews meet in his home. One of them was my friend Richard Mayer, [3] of whose distinguished appearance I have already written, but most of them were young. I was the only Gentile present. The purpose of their meeting was to discuss the' growing danger of anti-Jewish feeling in the United States -- what is commonly, though erroneously, referred to as "anti-Semitism." It was a mark of their confidence that they allowed me to be present.

To me their uneasiness seemed uncalled for. I must still have been almost completely devoid of any race consciousness. I did not think even of myself in biological terms, as belonging to a particular race,

[2] Rothschild was a Jewish friend whom Simpson had first met in 1922, near the beginning of his Franciscan period.

[3] This was another Jewish friend from 1922.

nor as being supremely indebted to the cultural inheritance this race had produced. I was a human being, and met every other man first of all as another human being, as an individual, whom I valued according to the worth I found in him as a person. Even

Richard Mayer, who could hardly have been taken for anything but a Jewish aristocrat (he might have passed as some kin of Disraeli), I had never thought of, until he himself asked me about it, as a Jew. He was simply my friend.

I was then 40 years old, but I think it was not until that evening that some little Jew-consciousness began to dawn within me. My eyes opened then, probably with some surprise in them, upon the fact that a Jew might be a creature quite different from myself, and that individually and collectively he might have an outlook on life and special problems of existence that distinguished him from all other people.

The experience lay completely dormant in my consciousness. I did nothing about it and gave it no thought. But the very next fall another experience prodded me a step further into an awareness that there might even be such a thing as a Jewish Question, a Jewish Problem -- and that the problem might be one that concerned the Gentile's existence as much as the Jew's.

I think it may have been on my way back from my weeks of work for Scott Nearing in Vermont that I stopped at Union Theological Seminary to see my old teacher and dearly loved friend Dr. Julius A. Bewer, who in his field, the Old Testament, was outstanding among American scholars. He was to become a member of the committee that brought out the latest authorized revision of the Bible. And among all the men I have known he was no less outstanding for his dignity, his humanity, his generosity, his integrity, and his calm judicial temper.

For some years he had been going home to Germany in the summers -- perhaps to deliver lectures at one of the great universities. Earlier visits had left him distressed over the chaos and despair that gripped the German people. But this last summer -- it was the first after Hitler's accession to power -- he had been electrified by the enormous change that had swept over the land. Everybody had work, bank accounts were soaring, there was light in men's faces, and the young people once more went about singing. Hope was in the air. At last there seemed to be a clear road ahead, and the people were being welded into a new unity in a common purpose to follow it.

"But," I replied, "while this is all very impressive, surely you wouldn't endorse the way our papers say Hitler has been treating the Jews."

"No," he agreed, "I could not defend the way Hitler has been treating the Jews, but apparently things had reached such a pass that something had to be done about it. I was told this by people who were kindly disposed to the Jews and who severely condemned their treatment by Hitler. One of these, a friend of mine, is a world-renowned scholar."

And then he went on to say that Jews controlled the German National Bank, and through the Bank the German government. They controlled all the most effective means of reaching and shaping the public mind: the publishing business, the papers and magazines, the radio, and the movies. Indeed, he averred that the Jews, though they numbered less than one per cent of the population, had been fast crowding Germans even out of their own universities.

I said nothing in reply. What could I have said? It was all totally new to me. I had never before heard such suspicions raised against "the Jews." I had never before been led to think of "them" as against "us," or had them spotted as an alien entity encysted within our social body to our danger. But Dr. Bewer was in a position to know what he was talking about, and he was the very last man of my acquaintance to make such charges without having satisfied himself that there was ground for them. Indeed, they came from him less

as an accusation than as a reluctant confession about a matter that gravely concerned him -- and concerned him all the more because he did not know the answer to it. He certainly was not of a mind to go with Hitler. However, though this talk with Dr. Bewer undeniably fixed itself in my memory, I still was not moved to investigate what reason there might be for his very evident anxiety. My own main interests were absorbing, and they directed my attention elsewhere.

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In another place [4] Simpson has written more about his feelings toward Jews during this period of his life:

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Somehow it had never entered my head that Jews in general were more different from myself than other foreigners, say, Italians; or that there was anything in particular about their history, their character, or their purpose that made them a danger to my country or to the racial stock from which I am sprung. To be sure, of the Jews with whom I had come into contact, there had been a pretty high proportion whom I had not liked very well. On the other hand, my Christianity, which I long took very seriously, had declared that God had made of one blood all the children of men. Race and nationality, therefore, were of no consequence.

Also, I had grown up amidst the prevalence of the democratic dogma, which in America has tacitly accepted the idea of the "melting pot" as a good thing. From my boyhood I had been used to meeting on every hand great numbers of men of strange cast and distant origin, but all presumably on their way to becoming American citizens. The Jews might be foreign, but hardly more so than Poles or French, and certainly not as different as Negroes. The truth is, I took Jews, as I took all men, simply as human beings, all of whom I accepted as my brothers. It had never occurred to me to lump them all together as "the Jews." I took them as they came -- that is, as individuals, some of whom I liked and some of whom I did not.

But on the whole I had been rather fortunate in the Jews with whom life had given me something more than the casual contact of the street or the marketplace. I remember, for instance, the thickly lisping

[4] An unpublished manuscript dealing specifically with the Jewish Question.

but very eager German Jew who painted and papered my study when I was a minister. He knew his craft and loved it, and did his work with that care and exactitude which is so revelatory of character, and which has always commanded my admiration. And I remember another Jew, whom I knew later -- a young lad from Russia, with fair hair and sky-blue eyes that were quick to mirror whatever was in his soul. He had a great love of animals and of the soil; and when he plowed wanted his feet bare that he might the more intimately feel the earth, and his head uncovered to sun and wind. An earthy fellow he was, in the best sense, and very kind, earnest, impulsive, and generous.

But I suppose my general estimate of Jews depended most on three friendships I had been privileged to enjoy for many years. All of them, as perhaps was natural, began in the early days of my Franciscan venture; and all of them, it should be noted too, were with individuals who had broken away from orthodox Judaism. One was with a young German Jewess, among the most mystical people I have ever known, who back in 1925 and 1926 gave me an understanding and therefore a support I felt badly in need of at the time and found nowhere else.

Another was with a Jew even then perhaps somewhat past middle age, very tall and very lanky, with generous mouth firmly set, nose strongly hooked, graying black hair, eyes dark, deep-set, and penetrating under heavy bushy eyebrows. He was quiet and reserved, bore himself with aristocratic dignity, and stood out in almost any company. He had made his million and then had it confiscated at the end of World War I because he was a German alien.

The third was with a Jew more nearly of my own age, who bore one of the most distinguished names in the history of modern finance.[5] Yet he seems to have been sprung from ancestors animated less by any love

[5] This Jew was John Rothschild, introduced above in the autobiographical excerpt. The Jew described in the preceding paragraph was Richard Meyer, also introduced in the same autobiographical excerpt.

of money than by idealism. At any rate his father had written two biographical studies of Lincoln, of whom he was a great admirer. And my friend himself had been so moved by my Franciscan way of life that for a while he could barely resist his desire to embrace it for himself. And even till near our friendship's end he was able to say, in a letter of recommendation in my behalf, that he felt closer to me than to any other man on earth. But by another side of his nature he was a typical urban intellectual. He had no inclination toward any work with his hands. His predominant aptitudes required the city. He was a born promoter. He seemed to know almost everybody of importance and had mastered the art of personal influence. But he was quiet, self-possessed, a man of excellent artistic taste, and he loved to make gifts. I have known very few men so generous. And very few of my friends of 25 years ago followed with as much patience and understanding as he the changes that began to come over my thinking after my reading of Nietzsche, or went so far in agreement, or were so long loyal with their backing.

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Now we return to September 1937, when Simpson was in England:

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One of the most important events of my trip was my meeting with Anthony M. Ludovici, a distinguished scholar and prolific writer, then only beginning to be recognized for what he was. I had supper and an evening with him and his wife at their home near London,

and several hours at my room in London itself, where he came with a close friend the next afternoon

He was a very spare man, of erect carriage, dark earnest eyes, and very sensitive face. All the furnishings of his home showed him to be very artistic in his interests and taste. He was a brilliant conversationalist, very fertile in his imagination, quick in his thinking, almost encyclopedic in his knowledge, and ready in the expression of his ideas

His view of the world situation was different from any other I came upon, and startled me by reviving August 1984 my recollections of the almost forgotten conversation I had had with Dr. Bewer just four years before. One of the first things he said to me was: "What do you make of the Jewish Question?"

"The Jewish Question!" I replied; "What is that?" For even after my talk with Dr. Bewer I had not come to lump Jews together as a whole, or to look upon them as particularly different from myself. I still had my very close Jewish friends. And certainly I had never thought of the Jews collectively as constituting any menace. But when I showed how little I was aware that there was such a thing as a Jewish Question, my host proceeded to lay before me a proposition that was as unpleasant as it was disturbing.

He began by alleging in regard to Britain what Dr. Bewer had represented in regard to Germany: that the Jewish international money power controlled the Bank of England, and that to it the government had become hogtied by overwhelming debt. And since the first allegiance of Jewish international finance was not to Britain but to Jewry, its irresistible power would always be exerted to dragoon any British government into serving the interests of Jewry rather than those of Britain.

The position of the British people was all the more perilous because this power operated so silently and invisibly as to escape notice and almost defy detection, and because every important means for reaching and shaping the public mind, whether press, cinema, or radio, was likewise in the hands of the Jews. Moreover, it was the same story in France, and he had reason to think it was the same in the United States. And world Jewry -- or more exactly, a certain dominant hard core within world Jewry -- (it had become terrifyingly apparent) was determined to have war.

At the bottom of it all, according to my host, was the Jews' hatred of Hitler, not so much because of any alleged persecutions as because of certain financial measures he had initiated that struck at the very root of the Jewish control of the modern world. Rightly or wrongly Hitler felt that the Jews were ruining Germany, that they had taken the direction of German life out of German hands.

The crux of the matter lay in the power of Jewish international finance, which aimed, in regard to Germany as with every other nation on earth, to get it into debt, and into ever deeper debt, that the Jews might extort ever larger amounts of interest money out of taxpayers' pockets, and above all, that they might exercise the creditor's power to force his debtor to do his will. The hand that lends must always be stronger than the hand that receives.

And Hitler, therefore, who had set the German people to dreaming of a Germany thoroughly rejuvenated and regenerated, saw clearly that such dreams must be frustrated unless Germany could get on her feet without going into debt to the international bankers. It was his success in accomplishing this, and the very example he set to other nations to do likewise, which was making the Jewish bankers' hair stand on end and driving them to fury. For if Hitler's system succeeded, it would destroy the Jews' system of getting the

nations into debt and keeping them in debt, and thus destroy their power to coerce the nations into doing what would serve their purpose. There was a lot more to it than that, but my host talked fast, and I could not afterwards recall everything he had said. But this was the heart of it. And as the upshot of it all, the decree had gone forth, not only to all Jewry but to the entire world, that Hitler and all his works must be destroyed. In fact, a "fighting fund" of no less than \$2.5 billion had been raised, and even announced in the London papers, for this express purpose. In every country every possible means was being used to influence the world to bring Germany down

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Unfortunately, there was all too little time for discussion: I had to leave for an appointment. But, as I took my departure, he put in my hands some papers and pamphlets which he quickly gathered together, and with them a small book by "Cobbett" which bore the title Jews and the Jews in England. He thought it might help to move me toward investigating the vastly disturbing proposition he had set before me. This too, as I eventually discovered, was by Ludovici himself. He had had resort to a pseudonym because of his conviction that if he allowed it to come out under his own name, even though he had written it without rancor and as a scholar, he would never afterward have been able to get another book published

Stretched out on my deck chair on the return trip across the Atlantic I pondered many things. I thought of the various forms of social organization which human history reveals, and of the varying evils that had clouded every one of them. Man is a very old animal, and every social philosophy has long ago been conceived and every possible social form applied. And any good to be attained by anyone of them will always be shadowed, more or less, by some evil. There is no such thing as a perfect society. The idea of it is a sheer abstraction and can have no existence outside the heads of romantic idealists.

Inevitably, the achievement of one end will mean the sacrifice of some other; and the highest good of one man, or of one type or caliber of man, will be to some extent at another's expense. The great question to be answered in evaluating any society or any attempt at social amelioration is: Good for whom? Good for what? Good for the elevation and dominance and duration of a people and the achievement of culture -- or good for the day, the majority, "the happiness of the greatest number"? Good for the most gifted and noblest -- or good for the weakest, most botched, and most miserable?

Always somebody and something must be sacrificed. The critical question, therefore, will always remain: Who is to be sacrificed to whom? What good do you want, and are you willing to pay the price of it?

My mind roamed over the darkening international situation. I remembered the remark of my Jewish friend Richard Mayer, to the effect that Judaism and Christianity belonged together. Certainly Christianity, and especially Puritanism, was only a revived and revamped Judaism. Indeed, there were those who perceived in Christianity only the history of Jewish heresy. But I was far less concerned about the bearing of these two religions on each other and their relationship to the future than I was about what had been the historic effect on the European world of having the White people who created it pass under the direction of a religion that had not come out of their own life experience, out of their own unspoiled and unperverted instinct, traditions, and values. Nietzsche had declared, quite correctly, that Christianity was "the revenge of the Jews on the Gentiles": the Gentiles had taken from them their homeland, and the Jews had got

even by foisting upon the former their religion. And Blake had perceived, no less correctly, that "all nations believe the jews' code and worship the jews' god," and had pronounced in conclusion that "no greater subjection can be." Inevitably the question arose: Can the Western White man, especially Nordic Western man, ever fully repossess his own soul until he has thrown off this alien religion? But perhaps there was nothing in my entire trip to which my thoughts returned so much as the question about the part that some power within world Jewry might be taking to drive the world into war. As I dipped into the book that Ludovici had placed in my hands just before I left England, I discovered at once that he was quite right in claiming that it was written without rancor, not at all as a diatribe or as propaganda, but as a factual presentation of a situation. It was directed less against the Jews themselves than against certain Jewish values with which he felt their presence in our midst had infected us, and which he believed to be to our great injury and danger. Though I was yet a long way from any readiness to form a judgment, I did find myself strongly inclined to agree with him, that no really strong and great people will ever surrender the direction of its destiny to a people of alien blood and tradition, be they Jews or others, if they can by any means prevent it. Whether or not one could endorse the particular policy Hitler was following (he did; Dr. Bewer did not), I was impressed with the fact that both were agreed that something must be done to break the Jewish hold on Germany's life.

Part 7 of 7 parts

Editor's

Introduction:

William Simpson returned from a visit to Europe in 1937 deeply troubled by the ominous portents of impending horror and tragedy which were everywhere. He had not been able to understand what was driving so many men in the opinion-molding media in England and Scandinavia to preach a hatred of Germany which seemed suicidally reckless in its intensity; and why so many other men of influence and power who had declared themselves opposed on principle to war were reluctant to stand up against the warmongers.

But his visit with Anthony Ludovici in London at the end of his trip had provided him with a key to understanding, and he had begun to think about the Jewish Question and its bearing on the coming war, and also on deeper and older ills. In particular, he thought about the Jewish origins of Christianity and their implications for Western man's spiritual development.

Later, although personal matters, including the ever-present problem of earning a living, delayed a serious study of the subject for more than a year, he was able eventually to turn his full attention to the Jewish role in the economic life of the West, and he began to see the same process of alienation at work there as in the West's religious life. A key book for him in this regard was Werner Sombart's classic, *The Jews and Modern Capitalism*:

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From this book of Sombart's, with its exceedingly impressive scholarship, it would seem evident that the Jews had had no less a part during World War II in seducing us away from our own values and ideals in the realm of economics into an adoption of their more materialistic and mercenary view of life. Also, out of their native flair for business and with their thousands of years of experience in commerce behind them, they invented, introduced, perfected, and almost forced upon the Western world the acceptance of all sorts of devices and institutions that have distinguished modern capitalism from any other form of it known.

Doubtless, some of these, given our acceptance of the system as a whole, made for convenience and the fostering of commerce (one thinks of the modern checkbook and the department store). At the same time it is obvious that many of the innovations introduced by the Jews with a primary regard for their own financial gain (such as advertising and the undercutting of prices) led to ruthless competition and to the undermining and gradual destruc-

[1] This is the seventh and final selection of excerpts from the unpublished autobiography of National Alliance member William Simpson to appear in NATIONAL VANGUARD. The earlier selections were in the issues of March, June, and August 1983; and January, March, and August 1984.

tion of the practices relating to production and distribution that had been shaped and established by the instincts and ideals of our own people during the Middle Ages. For centuries the guild system had given the consumer assurance of quality and his money's worth in what he bought; maintained competence in the worker and at the same time protected him against sickness and old age; held up the producers to exacting standards of materials and workmanship, and yet protected them against all unfair and anti-social competition. When these safeguards were removed, the Western world descended rapidly into the sordid, heartless, and socially ruinous scramble for gain that has marked its economic and financial life from that day to this.

It must be remarked, too, that the capitalist system in its modern form, as shaped under the hand of the Jews, has provided them (for example, in the impersonality of the joint stock company and its interlocking directorates) with innumerable means for exercising invisible control over the life of another people upon whom they have fastened themselves, and for thus keeping the fact of their control concealed. Sombart, writing over half a century ago, just before World War I, declared even then that "Jewish influence made the United States just what they are -- that is, American. For what we call Americanism is nothing else ... than the Jewish spirit distilled."

This certainly threw a light on our national life that I never had seen before, and alerted me to the need to be watchful for the Jewish hand in all the kaleidoscopic and fateful changes that were about to engulf the entire Western world. It brought home to me also that if Sombart's interpretations were correct, much more than a socialist revolution would be required to correct the evils of the capitalist system. All too likely this would

but perpetuate the old mercenariness under a new form. In the end it would be found that there could be no remedy short of the complete elimination of Jewish influence, so that the Gentile world could repossess its soul and shape a world after its own values, ideals, and vision.

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Such a conclusion as this -- that a prerequisite for the revitalizing of the White race and a consequent renewal of its civilization is the complete elimination of Jewish influence -- could hardly endear Simpson to the Christian, pacifist, and leftist colleagues of his Franciscan years, to say nothing of his Jewish friends.

Indeed, during the year between his meeting with Ludovici and his undertaking a serious study of the Jewish problem he found that his relations with his former friends and associates had become even more strained than before; as early as 1938 his door to their world was being slammed in his face:

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For years one of my chief sources of income had been gifts that came to me as a result of my speaking. But by this time my speaking engagements were falling off. To be sure, as already related, I had begun to feel considerable doubt about the long-range value of single potshots at new audiences, and therefore ceased to look for invitations. But it must be recognized that there had been a gradual slackening in the loyalty and affection of my friends.

I have mentioned this when relating how the effort to raise some money for me a few years before had turned out a fiasco They had been chilled by my repudiation of pacifism. Women generally resented my attitude toward feminism; and men and women alike, when not incensed, were at least troubled by my rejection of democracy and the doctrine of human equality, and by my endorsement of aristocracy

In time there were those who went so far as to tar me with the Nazi stick. It was not that I had been talking against the Jews. On this subject I had never opened my mouth. I still had my close friends, and in spite of all I had heard in England about the Jewish Question and my consequent resolution to investigate it, I still had done nothing. I had not known where to begin. In the whole United States I did not know of anyone who was concerned with the problem, or of any office or paper that might throw light on it.

But I had very openly showed my indebtedness to Nietzsche and my devotion to him.

And was not Nietzsche something of a hero for Hitler also? Indeed, more and more voices were being heard from men of high place -- editors, preachers, university professors -- who laid both Hitler and all of Nazism at the door of Nietzsche! Such people may have been animated by some secret and sinister desire to nip in the bud any promise of a spiritual renaissance in Europe, of which Nietzsche was surely one of the earliest and most significant signs. But, no matter what the wrong to Nietzsche, the connection of Nietzsche with Nazism was made. And Nazism was damned. The worldwide campaign launched in 1933 to destroy Nazism and all things German had been seeing to that.

Nazism was damned, damned in toto, without qualification or reserve, and anybody who had a word to say for it was damned likewise. I too. For I had confessed my approval of Hitler's taking the German women out of the offices and factories and telling them that their place of supreme usefulness was in the home, as wives and mothers. I had expressed

my admiration for the Nazi system of marriage loans designed to encourage reproduction by select young Germans of both sexes who rated highest for their heredity, physical soundness, and intellectual capacity. I had been inspired by the long-range wisdom the Nazis had shown in rescuing the German working class from the clutches of the moneylenders and thus securing family ownership of farms from generation to generation.

I had even endorsed their move, which was provided with the utmost legal, medical, and psychiatric safe-guards against encroachment upon individual or personal rights, to effect by artificial but humane means that purging of their national December 1934 breeding stock which Christianity or democratic civilization nowadays prevents, but which every people must effect somehow if it is not to be buried in its own uneliminated human rubbish. "Every organism that fails to excrete its waste products dies," Nietzsche had said. And it was only obvious, undeniable, unescapable, and desperate truth. But because it had been said by the Nazis, anyone else who said it after them was of the devil!

And so it was not to be long till Jerome Davis would be telling a friend of mine that I had turned renegade. And after a series of intense meetings at Dartmouth President Hopkins would tell Roy Chamberlin [2] that he would appreciate it if he did not have me to speak at Dartmouth any more. And Roy, albeit with regret, would write me that when he went to Dartmouth he had decided always to play ball with the team, and that therefore he would yield to the pressure put upon him: henceforth Dartmouth would be closed against me. And Dartmouth was not exceptional. We were entering into the intellectual twilight of the new fanaticism that closed down upon the Western world with the advent of modern "liberalism. "

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With the beginning of the war, the twilight became a virtual blackout of every expression of thought not consonant with Jewish interests. But even though Simpson could no longer speak publicly at colleges and universities, he found other ways of sharing his insights, primarily through an extensive correspondence.

Between 1944 and 1948 he wrote a series of 19 papers in the form of letters, "some of them running to about 70 single-spaced pages," in

[2] Jerome Davis and Roy Chamberlin were Simpson's friends from his Franciscan period. In 1938 Davis was a professor at the Yale University Divinity School, and Chamberlin was a professor at Dartmouth College. Only four years earlier Davis had written the introduction to Simpson's book *Toward the Rising Sun*, in which he had described the author as a man "dedicated uncompromisingly, fearlessly, self-sacrificingly, to the highest truth."

which he laid out the ideas which, three decades later, were to be incorporated into *Which Way Western Man?*:

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These papers went to a fairly wide circle of friends and interested acquaintances, predominantly in the United States but also to places as remote as England, Germany, Kenya, South Africa, Peru, and Australia. My readers were largely professional people: ministers, doctors, and college professors. One of them was president of Swarthmore College, and another was president of Princeton's Institute for Advanced Study. And there was a sprinkling of artists, scientists, free-lance writers, a career diplomat or two, a very gifted and distinguished English sociologist, and at least one whom I can think of only as a seer.

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Simpson's writing during this period of war and war's aftermath differed from the writing of his youth. Now he wrote with a more mature understanding of the nature of man and his world:

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These pages already must have made it clear that even at the beginning of my Franciscan venture in 1920, I had believed that our people were sick and their civilization dying. But it may be said that then I was young and knew little of the world. Under the influence of St. Francis and Tolstoy, but supremely of Jesus, I conceived the crux of the transformation of any society to be the regeneration of the individual.

I believed it waited primarily on individual men's and women's rising above the fears and demands of their self-centeredness and "finding God," to whose inner direction they then completely surrendered themselves. And I believed also that the greatest power in the world to accomplish this rebirth in men was love -- love for "that-of-God" which was in them. I still believe this. And I still believe also, as much as I did then, that no society can be better than, or other than, the men and women who compose it.

But when eventually I began to probe toward a diagnosis (something essentially alien to the whole approach of anyone whose life is patterned after St. Francis and Jesus), I came to realize I had been picturing the problem as narrower and smaller and other than it was: there was a vast amount of reality that I had been failing even to see, let alone to face.

Despite all I had observed in slums and felt in my own living experience in mines and mills, I had made very inadequate allowance for the all-pervasive, always conditioning, and commonly limiting factor of environment: the force of "the world" into which each one of us is born, the home, the school, the setup for making a living, and all the colossal social machinery for shaping human beings into stereotypes and faceless, mindless pawns. These collectively constitute a force that commonly suppresses those very impulses in men which alone could create what idealists think of as a desirable society. Even more serious, I made no allowance for the now completely established fact that the limits of what each of us can become are fixed even before we are born. We are unescapably conditioned by the set of genes, inherited from our ancestors, that happen to combine at the moment of our conception. An adverse environment may prevent our even realizing what we have in us, but the most favorable environment cannot increase what we have in us or enable us to surpass the limit originally set by our genetic inheritance. And then there is the enormously significant fact, which Robert Ardrey [3] began some years ago to press upon the attention of modern man, that we have come to be what we are by way of the killer ape, that millions of years of experience have built into our very

instincts both the will and the know-how, not only to stick together to achieve a common

[3] Robert Ardrey (1908-1980) was an amateur paleontologist and sociobiologist who popularized the concept of man's social behavior evolving from that of his prehuman ancestors. He wrote a series of books aimed at intelligent laymen: *African Genesis* (1961), *The Territorial Imperative* (1966), *The Social Contract* (1970), and *The Hunting Hypothesis* (1976).

end, but to compete even with our own kind for the ownership of property as the basis for social status, and from outsiders to take and to hold whatever we need not merely for the preservation of our life but for its expansion, its meaningful and satisfying fulfillment. Every great people's history begins with the record that it conquered a piece of land and held it against all comers. And for support in pursuit of such ends it evolved one code of morals that applied only within the bounds of its own kind, and another and quite contradictory code for those who were outside. The purpose of the former was to hold together and preserve the identity of those who "belonged," and to advance their interests. The purpose of the other was to conquer, or if not to conquer, at least to hold off and exclude, those who did not "belong," the outsider, the alien, the foreigner, the enemy. This will perhaps sufficiently suggest the kind of considerations (chiefly historical and scientific) which I have found it ever more necessary to take into account as I have explored the question of what constitutes health in a people, and, in particular, what the greatest peoples have had to do to attain that health which they clearly manifested while making their richest contributions to history. With this greatly expanded range of vision and with a new sense of what to look for, perhaps we can also single out symptoms that mark the turning point in a people's life, and the beginning of its decadence. Perhaps we can with some confidence even begin to put our finger on what initiated its decay, its decline, and its ultimate disappearance from history .

It was from such an angle and in such a spirit that I began in the early 1940s to approach that mounting crisis of the Western world in the midst of which we are living now. It is often said that it is a crisis for the whole world -- and truly enough, for there is probably no part of the world that is not affected by the changes now taking place; but it is supremely a crisis of the West, of Western culture and the destiny of the White people who created it. It has been preeminently the state of the White man's mind and soul, his fever, his folly, his mistakes, the slackening of his grip, the divisions and wrangling in his camp, that are responsible for the convulsions, hallucinations, and frenzy that have seized upon so much of the rest of the world.

Moreover, for the White man, as for no other people on earth, the crisis is swiftly shaping up as a matter of life or death. Those who command a view of the world situation and are able to look out upon it as from afar, -- discern ever more clearly that the White man is being driven into a very tight corner, that the colored hordes of the whole world, outnumbering him seven to one and many millions of them within his own gates, are being inflamed, organized, armed, financed, and directed by men who intend to break the White man's power, destroy his civilization, and eviscerate and destroy the White man himself. I believe history will record that no threat the White man has ever had to face

has been the equal of this.

The moment we acknowledge the gravity of the crisis that confronts our people we must ask ourselves how it all came to pass: this spreading sickness among us; the confusion of mind and soul; the neglect of the hallowed values by which our people have been guided for centuries; the decline of standards, ideals, and discipline -- which have led, naturally and inevitably, to a breakdown of law and order, the loss of all sure sense of direction, and even of the very will to survive. With the passage of every month the acutely perceptive and thoughtful observer sees further evidence of the disappearance of that inner structure and functional order which are the mark of healthy life in every organism. More and more he is reminded of a rotten apple.

But what canker could it have been, what worm at our heart, that shook us from the tree of life, to fall to earth, and there to rot?

One thinks of Spengler's cyclical theory, which likens every civilization to an organism that is born and grows into some distinctive form, bears fruit till it weakens, as all living things weaken in time, and thus falls a victim of disease and finally dies. Does this explain what has been happening to us? Is the cause of our present degeneracy, however much we may by analysis break it down into a multitude of factors -- religious, ethnological, ecological, biological, genetic, social, political, economic, or financial -- in the end to be resolved into a mysterious something that has thus far proved inseparable from very existence in a world of time and space?

And is it therefore inevitable that even as the civilization of the ancient Hindus in time went down, and likewise that of the Egyptians, the Persians, the Greeks and the Romans, we too must go in our turn? Must we accept it as but another manifestation of the course of Nature, as unavoidable as the change of spring into summer and the passage from summer into autumn and winter? And is there nothing better for the man of wisdom and bold heart, of great love of his kind and great faith in what human beings can rise to -- is there nothing better for such a man to do than bow his head and fold his hands and wait for the inevitable end of his people, even as he prepares for his own end as an individual man?

That there is much in history to support Spengler's thesis is surely undeniable

Nevertheless, I will at once confess, I am not convinced that it is altogether well founded. The verdict of history, unanimous in a way though it be, leaves unanswered what for us is the most critical and pressing question: Why have past civilizations died? Was there ever any inherent inevitability about their dying? Is it conceivable that if anyone of the great civilizations had been headed by men of deeper wisdom, and had possessed fuller ability to keep its life under controlled direction, it would not have died -- or at least, would not have died so soon?

Questions of this kind were to turn themselves over in my mind, off and on, and slowly taking one shape or another, for a quarter of a century. But at the time we have now reached in my story I was for the most part only detecting symptoms of disorder and decadence. It would take another decade or two of further searching study before I should feel a growing certainty about causes and be ready to weigh the plausibility of a theory or balance one diagnosis against another.

Nevertheless, I was detecting even in the early 1940s symptoms of decadence precisely where the overwhelming majority of my fellow-men, even thoughtful men, found evidence of health and advance, and promise of a still greater and more glorious future.

Something in me had been quick to find grounds for suspicion and to catch the odor of human decay in a great variety of ideas, obsessions, trends, institutions, and mass movements increasingly prevalent in our country. Typical examples of these I herewith submit to my reader pretty much as they come to my mind

I think, then, of the doctrine that all men are equal, even all races of men; the call to recognize and accept all human beings as one's brothers; the philosophy of pacifism, with its refusal to fight in defense of one's own; the emphasis on environment as a factor more determinative of human destiny than heredity, with the consequent prevalence of our present disparagement of breed and brains, family and even race, and the resulting drive to obliterate the "color bar" and remove all obstacles to race-mixing; the doctrine of democracy (or rule by the majority), which implies a belief that numbers can be a substitute for intellect and that wisdom can be got by counting heads even though most of them be empty; the spread of feminism, which poisons women (and not least our most gifted women) against their own sex, turns them into poor imitations and weak rivals of men, and by their balking against child-bearing makes them traitors to their country and their kind; the factory system, with its piece work, conveyor belt, and mass production; the bleeding of the countryside, the source of all life, to build ever more and ever larger cities; radio and television, and even the automobile and the airplane; "progressive" education and the opening of the colleges to everybody; the concentration of education, science, and politics on salvaging and improving the underdog, the botched and generally inferior, instead of on discovering the soundest and most highly gifted among us, with a view to enabling society to harvest the benefits to be derived (and that can be derived only) from the fruiting of their genius; and, blanketing everything, a hypertrophy of tolerance, which demands an attitude of universal permissiveness, even toward what is aimed at destroying one's life or the life of one's people.

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In addition to being concerned about these symptoms of decay, Simpson also continued to wrestle during the 1940s with the implications of Christianity's failure -- indeed, of its inability -- to address them and to provide guidance through the West's growing crisis:

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In none of those whom we have considered our greatest religious teachers is such silence more marked than it is in Jesus, and the evil and peril that have overtaken us in consequence is enormous and appalling. One may answer in Jesus' defense that what he did say has had social implications, but for me it is far too vague and uncertain to be a really helpful guide. Indeed, these implications, insofar as we can deduce what they were, seem to me to have worked very largely for our undoing.

In any case, the most searching part of his most explicit teaching was plainly addressed to a small inner circle, who, with him, were committed to a mission so special that very few men of his or any other day could be expected to shoulder it, a mission so extreme that those who dedicated themselves to it must have been virtually cut off from all organized society except as it supplied them with bread and board, and surrounded them with people to go among to win as converts or to guard against as enemies.

Perhaps the extremity of the demand that Jesus' way of life made upon men arose from his belief that the end of the world was at hand. But regardless of the explanation, he

plainly failed, as far as I can see, to look upon the life of man on earth as a garden which, from its beginning to its end, as long as it existed, would have need to be cultivated in a special way in order to produce in large number the kind of men he had spent all his life trying to find, mostly in vain. This, I submit, is a sizeable failure. And as for the rest of the mystics, it may safely be said that their failure was less only as their gifts and their influence were smaller.

As I had reviewed and contemplated all this through the years I had come to feel more and more strongly that, however narrow might be the range of my own influence, I did not want to fall short as so many others had before me. It had been laid upon me to bear faithful witness to what my lifelong quest had taught me. And if I had learned something about what the individual man -- as our fathers used to say -- "must do to be saved," it was no whit less certain that there were things a society likewise, a nation, a people, a race must do (and avoid doing) if it is to hold sickness at bay, escape destruction, come to its fulfillment, realize its destiny.

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And, of course, William Simpson has borne faithful witness, throughout his life. More than that, he has been a "spirit yearning in desire/ To follow knowledge like a sinking star! Beyond the utmost bound of human thought. " He has never, like so many others, stopped short of unpopular or demanding conclusions; he has never been one to go only halfway:

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That I might ever cleave to the highest I might find I had held myself ready, if need be, to leave anything that tied me down or held me back: any idea or ideal however long cherished, any friendship however close, any possession tangible or intangible. No study of mine was ever prompted or guided by thought of ensuring a living, or winning recognition as an "authority," or having "something to say to the world," or even of being listened to by anybody.

I went after the truth as the roots of a tree go after food and drink. It belonged to the essence of my being. It was necessary to my very existence. I would have had to follow it though I had foreseen it must in the end leave me entirely alone.

The problems were my own problems before I saw them as problems to which a solution was required for society. I needed answers in order to shape within me, if possible, a universe and a human world in which I myself could stand erect, get my bearings, set a course, and have the strength to hold it. I dared offer nothing to my groping and struggling fellow humans that I had not first passed through the crucible of my own mind and tested, as it were, in my own blood, in my own living experience.

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He has strived and sought and found, and he has offered all that he has found to everyone with ears to hear or eyes to see.

He has borne witness by living always in accordance with what he had so far found at each stage of his life. And, approaching the end of his ability to strive further and find more, he has borne witness by setting down his findings in his writings, most notably

Which Way Western Man?and this autobiography, that they might serve as a guide for those willing and able to strive beyond the point at which he was obliged to stop. Of his autobiography he notes:

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While I could not say truthfully that I am quite indifferent whether or not what I write is widely read or even read at all -- in fact, whether it is even published -- it is true that in what I write now, as throughout all this book, I am primarily, before anything else, simply making a report to my God -- or if you will, to my own soul, perhaps I ought even to say, to my fellowmen.

In the beginning, some 70 years ago, I found myself charged to do something, to put my life to a certain use, to make my very self, my living experience -- it is not too much to say -- a testing ground for mankind. In a real sense my life then and there ceased to be my own. I have tried through the years since to be true to what I was inwardly commanded to do. With the results, to be sure, I cannot say I am pleased. Of my life it will be enough to say, "He did what he could. It was one man's striving."